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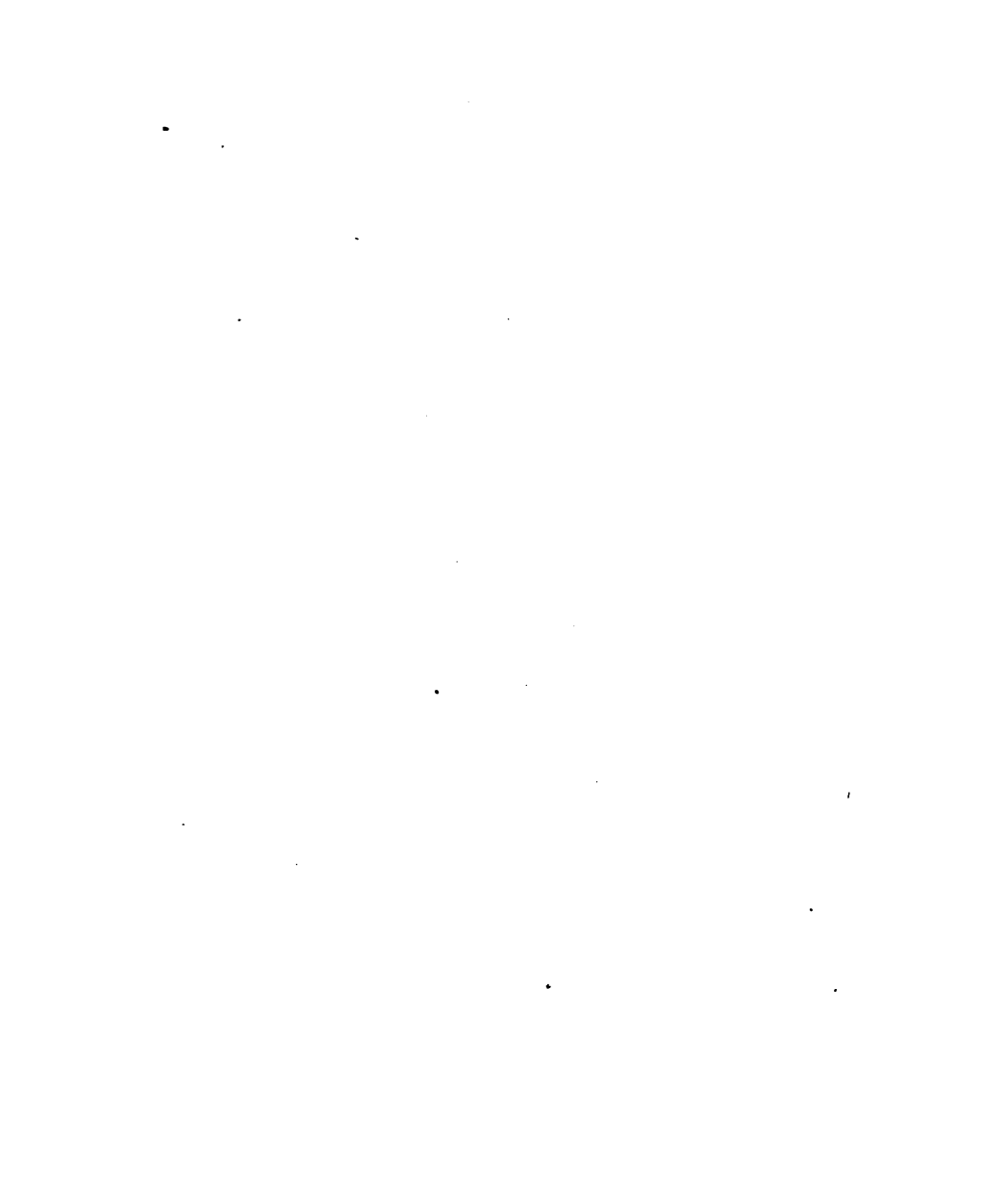


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PLAIN

CHURCH TEACHING

FOR

Week-days throughout the Year ;

OR,

READINGS FROM THE
COLLECT, EPISTLE, & GOSPEL
OF EACH SUNDAY, &c.

SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR COTTAGE READING.

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157
1



CONTENTS.

(VOL. II.)

Trinity.

	PAGE.
THE GLORY OF THE ETERNAL TRINITY. (Week after Trinity Sunday.)	3
GOD THE FATHER. (First week after Trinity.) ...	11
GOD THE SON. (Second week.)	19
GOD THE HOLY GHOST. (Third week.)	28
THE REVELATION OF GLORY. (Fourth week.) ...	35
SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE. (Fifth week.)	43
LIFE WITH CHRIST. (Sixth week.)	52
GRAFTING. (Seventh week.)	60
THE TWOFOLD PRAYER. (Eighth week.)	69
THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. (Ninth week.)...	77
THE WILL OF GOD. (Tenth week.)	85

	PAGE.
MORE THAN CONQUERORS. (Eleventh week.) ...	94
THE ABUNDANCE OF MERCY. (Twelfth week.) ...	102
THE GIFT OF GOD. (Thirteenth week.) ...	110
THE LOVE OF THE COMMANDMENT. (Fourteenth week.) ...	119
DOUBLE SERVICE. (Fifteenth week.) ...	129
THE CHURCH THROUGHOUT ALL AGES. (Sixteenth week.) ...	139
THE CLOUDY PILLAR. (Seventeenth week.) ...	149
SPEECHLESS OR BLAMELESS. (Eighteenth week.) ...	158
THE THREE STATES. (Nineteenth week.) ...	167
CHEERFULNESS. (Twentieth week.) ...	177
A QUIET MIND. (Twenty-first week.) ...	187
PERSEVERANCE. (Twenty-second week.) ...	198
THE PERFECTING OF PRAYER (Twenty-third week.)	206
RENEWED CLEANSING. (Twenty-fourth week.) ...	214
THE REWARD OF WELL-DOING. (Twenty-fifth week.)	223



Week after Trinity Sunday.



THE GLORY OF THE ETERNAL
TRINITY.

“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.”—*Rev.* iv. 8.

WE seem to-day to be lifted up, together with the whole Church Militant from the things of earth, into the midst of the glories of Heaven.

We are lost, in the revelation of the wonderful sights and sounds which S. John shews to us and makes us hear. To each one of us, the voice “Come up hither” seems to call, and as we attend to what the Beloved Apostle, “in the Spirit,” saw, we forget all, in the thought of

the Throne on which "One sat," Who was "to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone," encircled with that mysterious rainbow, "in sight like unto an emerald."

But what are we led to through all this? Through the sight of the elders in their "white raiment," crowned with golden crowns, and across the Sea of Crystal, we are brought to that on which to-day's teaching especially turns, namely, the Worship of the Holy Trinity. We read of the unceasing adoration of Heaven, how those mysterious winged creatures in the midst of, and round about the Throne, "rest not day and night, saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy;'" and that when they thus worship the Three in One, and One in Three, "the four-and-twenty elders" catch the fire of devotion, and "fall down before Him" Who sitteth on the Throne, and worship, casting down their crowns, and

saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power."

Now the idea of Worship, of which we have already spoken, is not only the special thought for us in *this* week's teaching, but we may consider it as our great lesson, in some form or other, for the whole season of Trinity, upon which we are now entering. For we must not think of worship only in the light of prayer, or even as adoration alone. Worship may be considered in a much wider sense, for it is a spirit of mind, which leads indeed to both prayer and adoration, but stays not at these, sanctifying the whole life with a spirit of reverence and self-sacrifice, so that those imbued with this holy temper of mind, shew forth the praises of their God, not only with their lips, but in their lives, by giving themselves up to His service, and by walking before Him in holiness and righteous-

ness all their days. We shall, then in this sense, have to keep before us all through Trinity-tide, the thought of worship, of doing God service, of bearing fruit to His glory.

For what may we liken this season to? Is it not to the soul taught in the Church's ways, as the *summer* and *autumn* of her year? The field of our hearts has been, as it were, ploughed, and harrowed, and prepared for the precious seed in Advent and Lent; and further, the good seed has been sown, and has sprung up in many souls, an earnest, we may hope, of the harvest to come. But now the Sun of the Church's year is shining in full splendour, the grain, or plant, or flower, must grow unto perfection, the harvest must ripen; and this time of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" we may consider the season of Trinity to be.

This is the time for bringing all our previous

teaching to "good effect,"—this is the time for increase, for fruit-bearing. As regards, however, *this week's* special teaching, how is it with us? Are we losing ourselves in the thought of God; not only delighting to read and hear about the glories of Heaven, but forgetting all things in the one reverent, consistent purpose of our lives, — the worship of God, both in the sanctuary, and in the constant offering of our daily lives to Him? Do we really worship the Father as Holy, the Son as Holy, the Blessed Spirit as Holy, the Three in One, as "God Blessed for ever," our Father, our Dear Lord and Saviour, our Source of Holiness, our Comforter? If so, we are in some degree, at least, entering into communion with the worship of Heaven, and into the spirit of the Collect.

"The Glory of the Eternal Trinity," there spoken of, reminds us of the beautiful hymn

which we sing at the end of the Office for Holy Communion, when the Church, after giving glory to God, turns, as it were, yet more intensely to *Himself*, saying, "We praise *Thee*, we bless *Thee*, we worship *Thee*, we glorify *Thee*, we give thanks to *Thee*, *for Thy great Glory*." Here is a very *abandonment* of praise! Yet, well indeed for us is it, that we should at times remember, and dwell upon, the exceeding Greatness and Glory of our God. For, "Who is so great a God as our God?" "Who is a Rock save our God?" "For I know that the Lord is Great, and that our Lord is above all Gods."

What a shelter is the thought of the Power of God to the faithful, even "as the shadow of a great rock" in the "weary land" of this world! How wonderful is the thought that "It is the glorious God that maketh the thunder," and

that "ruleth the sea," Who is *our God, our Father!* So let us take refuge in the Strength of His Majesty, His Power, and Love, and there, safe sheltered, adore Him unceasingly, in our hearts, and lives, worshipping Him with "holy worship."

In the Gospel for the week, we have the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity brought before us in a special manner. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night; he owns that He is a Teacher come from God. Then our Blessed Lord reveals Himself in this character, and declares that we must "be born of water and of *the Spirit.*" Thus we have God the Father sending the Son, and God the Son pointing us to the quickening power of God the Spirit. Well may we pray, as in the Collect, that we may be kept "stedfast in this Faith," and look to our God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our

Buckler, our Shield and Defence against "all adversities;" for "Who is God but the Lord, or who hath *any strength* except our God."

Glory be to the Father, &c.



First Week after Trinity.



G O D T H E F A T H E R .

"God is Love."—1 *S. John* iv. 8.

I THINK it will be a good beginning to our further Readings on Trinity-tide if, in the first three week's of this season, we separately consider each Holy Person in the Blessed Trinity, in some special character, or perfection, belonging to each.

To-day, then, let us consider our God, our Father, in the beautiful words of the text, so often quoted amongst us, "*God is Love.*" At first sight this text seems only to speak to us of comfort, of rest, of peace. And so it might do,

so it ought to do, if we were what we should be. But considering what we *are*, we dare not take the comfort without the warning.

Let us, then, notice three things. First—By whom were these words written? Secondly—How far are we of like spirit with him? Thirdly—What is the great proof to us of God's Love? And then let us ask ourselves how are we responding to that Love?

First—By whom were these words written? By the holy Apostle S. John,—he who had been permitted to lean on Jesus' Breast, even in this life. To him, and to him alone, was revealed this new name of *Love*. No other writer of Holy Scripture, was suffered to penetrate this mystery, none other so to see God's true character, as to be enabled to write from his own pure far-seeing heart "*God is Love*." How often are these words taken up by those who

have no right to them as their comfort! And why?

This question brings us to the second part of our subject, namely,—How far are we of like spirit with S. John? Pure in heart as he was, devoted to our Lord as he was, overflowing with love as he was? Alas! alas! and yet how ready are we to take S. John's words, to hang them, may be, on the very walls of our houses, and yet be so living, that they are our own condemnation.

And this brings us to our third point,—What is the great proof to us of God's Love? "*Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son.*" And, then we are led on still further, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also,"

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These words from the Epistle for this week, bring us, lastly, to the question,—How are we responding to God's Love for us? Are we, that is, giving Him love in return, and fulfilling His command, "that he who loveth God love his brother also.

"*God is Love.*" Consider how these words should sink into our hearts. "*God is Love.*" "And He sent His Son," might each one say, "to *save me*; how am I living, what return for this Love am I rendering to my God? 'God is Love!' I thought once that this meant He was so good and kind, I need not fear Him. But 'He sent His Son' to save me, and I am not living as I ought. I have these words on my cottage wall, indeed, but what right have I to them? It is all the worse for me that 'God is Love,' when I am not living accordingly."

Such may well be the reflection of many

amongst us, it is much to be feared. If our Father is such a Good, such a Loving Father, is it not all the more terrible for us that we are not living so as to please Him? What can be more dreadful than the ingratitude of a child towards a loving parent. Again—How can we dare to take to ourselves the comfort of the Love of God, while our Sundays are spent at home, Holy Communion forsaken, intemperance, perhaps, given way to, children neglected or over-indulged, encouraged in disobedience, kept from school, badly brought up? How can we take to ourselves any hope, that to us God will be loving and merciful, when we neglect the warning voice of His Ministers, and refuse to repent and amend? Most awful is it to think of the end of those who continue to neglect the great Salvation of their God.

And how is it with more immediate regard to

our neighbours ? Think of the history in the Gospel, of the rich man and Lazarus. Perhaps you fancy that this passage of Holy Scripture, is only one for *rich people*. Not so ; here is a word for all,—a word condemning selfishness, thinking only of our own comfort, our own pleasure, our own needs, and forgetting those who, it may be, at our very doors, are worse off than we are. Do we who act thus, remember that even every cup of cold water given for the Love of God, shall in no wise lose its reward. Is God's recompensing Hand to be despised ? Ah ! let us look beyond this life ; let us remember the end of the rich man in the Gospel for to-day, not because he was rich, but because he did not love God and his neighbour ; and then let us think what will be the reward of those who act otherwise. For we must recollect that Jesus does not think of little acts of true



charity as done only to those whom we help or relieve ; He considers them as done to *Himself*.

Will you miss this reward, one day to hear His words, "*I* was an hungered and ye gave *Me* meat, I was thirsty and ye gave *Me* drink." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto *Me*?"

But now one word, in conclusion, to those who are longing, and striving, more fully to enter into the deep meaning of the most precious words of the text,—who not only love to read them, and to have them constantly at hand, but who earnestly endeavour to carry them out in their daily lives,—who are diligent in the use of all the means of grace, and are "glad" when the sound of the Church bell calls them to the "House of the Lord." To them we would say, "Be not weary in well doing," for in due season

ye shall reap if ye faint not. Persevere unto the end. Pray the prayer of the Collect, that you may have grace to keep the new Law of Charity. Strive to enter deeper and deeper into the Love of God, by ministering more earnestly to the wants of others. Rest in this Love, for He is your Father ; serve Him faithfully, for He is your God ; so that one day you may hear those words of endless joy,—“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world !” Amen.



Second Week after Trinity.



GOD THE SON.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—1 *S. John* iii. 16.

IN this text we learn, in an especial manner, some very deep truths. It may well form the heading to our meditation for this week, when we are about to consider especially the work of our Blessed Lord for us. Perhaps no words of Holy Scripture strike more directly home to us, when meditating on the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, than the words of the text,—“Herein perceive we the Love of God,

because *He* laid down His Life for us." Yes ; it was indeed the very Life of God, which was laid down upon the Cross. And not only on the Cross, but in all those long years of self-sacrifice, which reached from Bethlehem to Calvary.

How touching are S. John's constantly repeated lessons on the effect the Love of God should have upon us, in bringing forth our love to "the brethren." See how he ever links together, these two parts of Divine Charity. First, in the text, he concludes it by saying, "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Further on, in the Epistle for the week, he writes, "This is His Commandment, that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels

of compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him ?”

You see, this Charity, of which we are now speaking, is not only that to which we are to be *persuaded*. This Love of God, and of each other, is a positive command, to the fulfilment of which, He constrains us, by His Own great Love. So, in the Collect, we ask that we may have “a perpetual fear and love of His Holy Name.” A fear, that is, of offending our good God, of incurring the displeasure of our Father, of in any way despising the riches of His mercy in Christ Jesus.

Now, in the Gospel for the week, the blessings of the Salvation, which Jesus Christ came to secure and *to offer* to all, are spoken of under the figure of a great supper, which “a certain man made ready;” but when all things were prepared, and the bidden guests were told of it, they “with

one consent, began to make excuse." One made his land, another his cattle, another his wife, the reason for his neglect. They despised alike the Love which had prompted the invitation, and the good things prepared for them, and preferred going their own way, neither fearing the displeasure of him who spread the feast, nor caring to reject the offer of his love.

More than eighteen hundred years ago, this table was first spread for all men. "A certain man" made then a great supper. He spread a table in the wilderness of this world, and lifted up His Voice and cried, "Come unto Me, all ye—" He spread that table with precious promises, with deliverance from sin, with grace for holy living, with rest for the weary, and with sorrow too, that His Likeness might be stamped upon all His children; yet with Everlasting Life also, for every faithful soul.

And what was the response to His invitation, when that Voice cried "Come?" The answer was "Crucify Him, crucify Him." "We will not have this Man to reign over us." And then what followed? The Cross, the Nails, the Spear-wound. These were but a part of the world's answer. And what is the answer now? If not in word, yet in deed, it is "Crucify Him" still; it is still the rejection of Christ as King; it is still the Crown of Thorns, still the Cross, still the Spear-wound. Yes, even now, all around us, we find our dear Lord put to shame; still, through sin, crucified afresh, still rejected, still grieved. O Lord God, how is it that Thou art so patient? How is it that Thou dost still give us time for repentance? Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!

Upon *us*. Yes, for here comes the great question for each one,—How am I myself re-

sponding to my Lord's gracious call? For us the Gospel Feast is spread. Again the Lord of the Feast cries, "Come, for all things are now ready." Behold, a new way is opened unto Life by Me. "Come." "Ask and ye shall receive." "Learn of Me." "Eat and drink at My Table," and ye shall go in the strength of that Meat, even unto "the Mount of God." Alas! still the answer is the same, and men pass by, as if to them, these things were nothing. They say still, they are too much engaged with worldly business, or too hard-worked, or too much taken up with the cares of home, to listen to the Gospel call. They forget that there is an ending to all this from the *Lord's* side, that any moment another cry may sound forth,—“I say unto you, that *none* of those men which were bidden shall taste of My Supper.”

We have only as yet considered the invitation as a general one to all the Blessings of the Gospel. But, surely, those who have gone thus far with me, must have thought of *the* Feast of the Gospel, still so often and so lovingly spread, and of the Voice which there is ever crying "Come unto Me." And if to the general invitation, the answer is the one already described, how much more is it so, when the Feast spread is the very true Supper of the Lord. Perhaps we ask some why they do not come, and they say they have so much to do on the Lord's Day, in the business of their lives ; this, that, or the other needs so much attention that they cannot come. Others will tell us that they have cattle, and they must be attended to ; others make family cares their excuse. Yet, for the most part, all these know full well, that, were they bidden to see some great sight, were they asked

to an earthly feast, were they invited to some entertainment of this world, in most cases not a difficulty would be raised. The necessary preparation would *somehow* be gone through, and there would be the fear of offending the master of the feast, and love of the pleasure of the feast, to draw them, and to lead them, to make almost any sacrifice in order to be there. But when God spreads the Holy Altar as His Table, and sends His servant, His Minister, to say "Come," the greater number still refuse, and all with one consent begin to make excuse. Yet they *know* that they are wrong ; for if you ask nine persons out of ten, whether or not they *ought* to come to the Holy Supper of the Lord, they will tell you they know they ought ; they are not sinning ignorantly, and yet, and yet, and yet, there is always something that keeps them back. Poor souls ! They little think what it

may come to; when the land they think so much of shall be shrivelled up as a scroll; when their cattle shall no longer fill their thoughts, but their one only care be how they may hide themselves from the "wrath of the Lamb;" when time itself shall cease, seeing that "the fashion of this world passeth away," and the Voice of the Lord shall sound exceeding loud: "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out My Hands and no man regarded, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."



Third Week after Trinity.



GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

“Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist.”—1 *S. Peter*, v. 8, 9.

THE Collect for this week, with many others, evidently supposes the course of the Christian to be beset with dangers and impediments, of such a nature and of such a strength, as to need the aid of the Mighty Hand of God, in order that he may be delivered from them. The text, which is taken from the Epistle for the week, speaks of the awful danger we are in, from the fierce prowling nature of Satan, whom it likens to a lion, so strong is he for evil ; and

moreover to "a roaring lion," a hungry creature, seeking for prey, "seeking whom he may devour." And him we are told to "*resist*," that is, we are to oppose him,—to fight manfully against him.

But there are more dangers still to be thought of, as we are told in the Gospel. There is the wandering from the Good Shepherd to be feared, as in the case of the poor sheep in the Gospel; and there is the danger of being lost, even when we have been signed with the Mark of our King, as the coin was lost, also in the Gospel for the week.

Further, as you know, many of our foes and of our dangers are inward foes, inward perils, dangers in our souls, in our hearts, in our minds. It is within that Satan wages his most fearful war, and therefore it is within that our strength must also be. We need Spirit to fight

with spirit, Power with power. Here, then, we come to our subject—"We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves." Where, then, must we flee to? to whom must we look? In the Epistle to the Romans we read, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." And this Blessed Spirit is within us—"Know ye not that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Even so, in every baptised Christian, the Holy Spirit dwells, All-powerful, All-searching. Within us, He is ever ready to fight for us, if we will choose Him to fight with us. He will never leave us, unless we drive His Holy Presence from us, by our sloth, our indifference, or our sin. In Holy Baptism He quickened us, that is, made us to be alive in the sight of God. In Confirmation He renewed us, through the Word He teaches us, in every Ordinance of Grace He is present with us, applying the virtue of each to our souls.



His office is to sanctify, to make holy; as in the Catechism, "Who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God." How fearful is the thought of evil-doing, when this Blessed Spirit is within us; how dreadful must the sin be in God's sight when we defile those bodies which, as we have seen, are the very temples of the Holy Ghost!

But while there is most solemn warning against sin in the thought of the In-dwelling Spirit of God, there is also, as ever, infinite comfort for the persevering and striving Christian. For if the adversary thirsts for our destruction, much more doth the Holy Spirit for our salvation. If Satan is powerful, far more subtle and powerful than we are, yet the Blessed Spirit is stronger still, more mighty than either, for "the Holy Ghost is *God*." If we are beset with dangers and snares innumerable, yet so are

we surrounded by the ever-watchful care and aided by the holy suggestions of the Blessed Spirit, so that in every peril there is a Refuge for us, in every temptation deliverance, for every unholy thought a good thought ready to take its place, *if we will but listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost within us*, and follow His guidance.

Be ye therefore humble, sober, vigilant, that is, watchful; "resist the devil," by the power of the good Spirit within you, "and he will flee from you." Give yourselves up to the Good Shepherd's care, and He will keep and defend you. Though you have been as lost, yet is He able once more to renew you, and place you again in the Church's holy keeping, so that she may rejoice over you, like unto the rejoicings of the angels over a sinner that repenteth.

But who is there that really repents of sin, that is not only sorry, but that yields up the soul

to the Holy Ghost, so that the exact opposite of his sin, as has been beautifully taught, may be wrought by the Blessed Spirit within him ? Quick temper giving place to gentleness, impatience to submission, over hasty or excited talking to slowness of speech and prudence, intemperance to sobriety, untruthfulness to growing sincerity, vanity to self-forgetfulness. Yet this is the evidence of our new life in God, which we should all seek to have. This should be the fruit of our resistance of evil, so that "we are more than conquerors." We do more than resist the evil, for we choose and are clothed upon with good. What a wonderful, deep, real meaning there is in this command *to resist* ! It implies that we have been attacked, for you cannot be said to resist until some force has been brought to bear upon you. And Satan does assault us with manifold temptations, with

evil thoughts, with evil desires, with divers allurements, with every means he can bring to bear upon our destruction. And it is these assaults we are to resist, to grapple with, to determine to overcome, not merely by the force of our own will, but by uniting our will to the Will of God, by leaning on Him for aid, by following the inward guidance of His Blessed Spirit and the outward guidance of His Word and of His Ministers, that so by these, and by a diligent use of every means of grace, we may "resist the devil," and he may flee from us.



Fourth Week after Trinity.



THE REVELATION OF GLORY.

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—*Romans* viii. 18.

WHO was it that wrote these words? How much depends on the answer to this question. We know, indeed, that, be it as it may, they are the very truth of God, being part of His inspired Word; but yet, had they been put by the Blessed Spirit into the mouth of one who had not *known* suffering, how much less *force* would they have had to our minds. Who, then, is it who says "*I reckon?*" One who had

good reason to know of what the Holy Ghost spake by him, one who had long endured the loss of all things for Jesus' sake, one who had been "in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." It was St. Paul who could write these words, after having gone through all, and doubtless much more than is recorded in the eleventh chapter of his second Epistle to the Corinthians ; it is he who said, "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.*"

But St. Paul knew something also of the Revelation of Glory, to which he says, in the latter part of the text, the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared. He knew it, too, in no ordinary degree ; not only as most of us know it, by faith alone, but he knew it by



personal experience. He tells us how above fourteen years before he wrote these words, he was caught up to the third Heaven, even unto Paradise, and heard unspeakable things, not lawful for man to utter. It was, then, from his own knowledge that he wrote, and the Light of the Celestial Glory with which he had been surrounded made even all the sufferings he had gone through appear to him so small that they were not worthy to be compared to it. Six years afterwards he was able to speak further of the radiant crown awaiting him, which the Lord should give him, adding also, with touching humility and unselfishness, "and not to me only but to all them also who love His appearing."

And now, if we are truly and earnestly setting our faces Zionwards, we shall have caught something of S. Paul's spirit; we shall be willing to suffer here according to the Will of God, when

we look forward to the Hope of Eternal Glory hereafter; and the more holy our lives are the more stedfast will grow our Hope; and the more stedfast our Hope becomes, the smaller will all the sufferings of this life appear in comparison; Heaven will become more clear to our view through the eye of Faith, and the things of this life grow fainter and more dim, as "our conversation is 'more and more' in Heaven."

But who is there amongst us living this saintly life? Let us not too hastily take to ourselves a portion amongst those who are assured of the never-fading crown; remember the one condition,—“and not to me only, but to all them also who *love His appearing*.” Do we shrink from this test? Let us consider it. Do we really so love our Blessed Lord, are we so living, so glorifying Him, that we can look forward to seeing Him with joy when He comes at the



Last Great Day? Do we *love* His appearing? It is only for such, again, we must remember, that the crown spoken of by S. Paul is prepared. What a solemn thought for each one of us, what a question for self-examination! How am I looking forward to the coming of Jesus, is it with fear or with joy? do I "*love* His appearing?"

And now, would we love it, would we *attain* to the Revelation of Glory, we must, in the words of the Collect, "so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal." And how can we do this? Only by living for the next world and not for this; only by seeking to do God's Will more and more perfectly, as the angels do in Heaven. Is this what we are striving after, in everything small as well as great, to do the Will of our Heavenly Father?

There are many questions we might ask ourselves, in order to come to a clearer sight of how we really stand before God, but let us try and take at least some of the lessons from the Gospel for the week, and consider how far we are fulfilling what we are there taught. Two of the chief points spoken of are on judging one another, and on the forgiveness of injuries.

Perhaps we may be able to say a very little on both subjects, but first let us consider our judgment of others. We have the line which we ought to take given to us in the first words of the Gospel—"Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful." But where is this spirit to be met with when we, for the most part, are expressing our opinion of others, and judging of them? For instance, when an evil report of anyone is set on foot, what is the reason we are so quick to believe in its truth,

so eager, as it would often appear, to prove it true, so ready to judge our neighbours capable of this or that, to lay to their charge some evil deed, while we are so slow to speak well of them, to tell of any good done by them. Is this according to the law of mercy, of pity, of kindness? An evil report will soon draw a crowd together; but the tidings of an act of love, a deed of kindness, do we see neighbours hurry together to tell of these?

Then, as regards forgiveness of injuries,—Do we forgive *as* we hope to be forgiven? Let us ever remember, the one is the absolute condition of the other; we *cannot* be forgiven unless we forgive. As we judge we shall be judged; as we forgive we shall be forgiven,—“With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.” When? Both now and in the Revelation of Glory, both here and hereafter. We are now, as it were,—most awful

thought!—measuring out our own judgment. Soon, we know not how soon, the Great Day of the Appearing of the Lord shall shine forth in the ever-growing brightness of Eternity; but, remember once more, the crown is only for those who *love* His appearing; remember that “every man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” And if in the course of our warfare, and in the process of our purification from sin, we suffer, and that grievously, remember, too, that S. Paul, that great sufferer, and that saint so far-seeing, could say, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” “In us.” Yes, even “in us;” for if we suffer here with Christ, “we shall also reign with Him;” and “when Christ Who is our Life shall appear,” we shall also “appear with Him in glory.” Amen.

Fifth Week after Trinity.



SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS'
SAKE.

“If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye.”

1 S. *Peter* iii. 14.

YOU most of you know, that in the early ages of the Church, it was no *easy* thing to be a Christian. We need only to look at the eleventh chapter of S. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, in order to see a description of the sufferings which, in times past, were permitted, as the portion of those who were determined to be faithful to their God. In the days in which the followers of Christ were thus tried, it needed

brave, strong hearts to stand firmly by the Name of Jesus, faithful even unto death. Then were no peaceful gatherings in God's House on the Lord's Day; no quiet walks with wife and children across the close-cropped pasture, or through the cornfields, in answer to the call of the Church bell; no calm still Communions; no peaceful taking of the Bread of Life; but rather, separation from those nearest and dearest; brief services held in obscure places, for fear of the hatred or ignorance of the heathen; Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist at great risk and danger, and the sacred Feast partaken of "in haste," as in elder times the faithful people of God, with loins girded and staff in hand, partook of the Feast of the Pass-over. They eat it in haste, as those ready for their departure to the land of Canaan, through the passage of the Red Sea.

And so, in like manner, our brethren and sisters in Christ, in the early ages of the Church, ate that Bread and drank that Cup, which was able to bring them safely to their promised Land, their Heavenly Canaan. For many of them, too, there was the passage of the Red Sea, ere they entered into rest, even the shedding of their own blood, for the sake of Him, Who had shed His Own Most Precious Blood for them. Yet they were "happy." "We count them happy which endure." "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye."

And now, let us not consider the days of suffering as passed away. Do not let us think now, or at any time, it is an *easy* thing to be a Christian. Even in our own day, in distant lands, suffering and loss, are the portion of those who confess Christ ; and here, and everywhere, if we are true soldiers of Christ, we must suffer.

Are we willing to do so? Are we ready to suffer loss for Christ's sake, as were those mentioned in this week's Gospel, who "forsook all and followed Him?" What are we bearing, or suffering, or losing, for His Name's sake?

In the Collect for the week, we ask God to grant peaceful days to His Church, that so we may serve Him joyfully in godly quietness. But while our Father grants us this prayer, in sending us peace, so that we can meet to pray to, and praise Him, for the most part, without fear, how are we acting, are we giving Him joyful service, and living in godly quietness? Are we so faithfully using our present opportunities and discipline, as to have a good hope, should more fiery trials await us, that we should be found faithful, enduring to the end. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." Again, I would ask, are we suffering



anything for righteousness' sake? If not, we have great reason for uneasiness, great cause to fear that our battle for Eternal Life has yet to begin. Even in worldly affairs, everyone must suffer in some way if they hope to succeed. How many find it necessary to "rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," in order to get on well in their business, as we read of the fishermen in the Gospel, who "toiled all night" in their craft. How self-denying the habits of a good workman, a faithful servant, a watchful seaman, a good soldier must ever be! If their heart be set on their profession they care not what trouble they take, in order to excel and win their object. And what are *we* doing? Are our hearts set on our profession as Christians? Can we each say with S. Paul, "*One* thing I do, I press toward the mark;" "I count all things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Alas! ought we not to be ashamed to compare our poor, weak, faltering service with his; our vacillating will, swaying to and fro, with his firm, stedfast, unalterable determination to suffer all things, to do all things, to win all things, in the service of his Lord!

But let us now come to some homely particulars by which we may try ourselves. Let us begin with our Sundays, concerning God's service in His House. Do we take any trouble so to arrange our necessary work, that at least on God's own Day we may be regular in our attendance at Church? If needful, are we willing to do with a less comfortable meal than usual, in order that we may insure this; or to suffer any other inconvenience for the same reason? Are we determined to take our stand for God, whatever others may say or think?

Are we willing to be laughed at, taunted, because we are resolved to do God's Will, to do our duty, whatever may be the consequences? Are we willing to bear unkind words patiently, to return a gentle answer to angry, wrathful speech? If we are not, we cannot claim to be of the happy number who "endure" for the Love of God, who "suffer for righteousness' sake." And if we are not, then we have reason to fear that we are of this world only, that we have little part or lot in the things of God; we are in danger, then, of forgetting the inheritance of blessing to which we are called, and which is spoken of in the Epistle; we have forgotten the "noble army of Martyrs" who have gone before us to the Heavenly Canaan. Yet, would we follow in their steps, we must begin by very homely lessons: in the language of the Epistle, plain enough almost for the youngest child to

understand, "He that will love life, and fain see good days, let him *refrain* his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it." And what is the reward of those who follow this counsel even now? "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." And what the warning to those who are inattentive to the Voice of the Lord? "The Face of the Lord is *against* them that do evil."

And now one word, in conclusion, to those who really do suffer for their profession, who are mocked at, it may be, because they belong to Christ, and are not ashamed to *show* that they belong to Him; who come to Church and Holy Communion in spite of what is said of them. To such we would say, Be not afraid of the terror of the ungodly, "neither be troubled, but

sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Determine, by God's grace, *never* to give up ; hold on to *the end* ; then will come the full reward ; wait for it in faithful service. God is watching you ; the holy angels are guarding you ; Jesus is longing for you, calling you closer and yet closer to Himself ; and when your course is run, if you be found faithful unto death, the whole company of Heaven will rejoice over you, and Jesus will see of the travail of His Soul and *be satisfied*. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life," saith the Lord. Amen.



Sixth Week after Trinity.



LIFE WITH CHRIST.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—

Rom. vi. 11.

IT seems very comforting, when considering the teaching of this week, to muse on the Eternal reward of the faithful, to think of the good things prepared, passing man's understanding. But in this our state of trial and probation, when God is proving us, to see whether or not we are faithful, it is not safe for us to dwell too exclusively, on the sweetnesses of the Gospel. We must not *only* grasp the

thought of the good things to come, not only meditate upon the mercy and goodness of God, not only on the reward prepared ; there is another side to the picture, which we are too apt to forget. There must be the Cross before the Crown, the battle before the victory ; and that God is a God of justice, is as much the truth, as that "God is Love ;" it is true that there is a Heaven, but that there is a Hell, is true also.

So you see in the Collect we dare not dwell on the good things to come, without praying for grace to win them, through that power of the Love of God, which is able to overcome all obstacles. Also, in the text, we read, not only of the life unto God, but also, and first, of the death unto sin, which must be gone through, ere we can be truly said to live unto Him. Further, in the Gospel, it is revealed unto us, that this life unto God here, is absolutely necessary to

ensure our Life with God hereafter. Our Lord Himself says, in the Gospel for the week, that there is an actual righteousness which we must have, without which we can in no case enter the Kingdom. He was speaking to His disciples of the Scribes and the Pharisees, and it was then He uttered those solemn words, "Except your righteousness *exceed* the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in *no case* enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Now let us think for a moment. The Scribes were those who made copies of the Law, who were employed, that is, in writing out portions of the Word of God. We who have printed Bibles, can scarcely understand how great that labour must have been. But even so far, then, the employment of the Scribes was an holy one; and our Blessed Lord seems to have recognised it as such, when He said "Every Scribe which

is instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasures, things new and old." Again, when Jesus was conversing with one of the Scribes, He found him so well stored with the knowledge of the Love of God and man, that He said, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." Yet, except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of these, we can in no case enter the Kingdom.

The Pharisees were a sect in the Jewish Church, remarkable for their strictness as regards all outward observances. S. Paul, before his conversion, was "a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee." He describes himself at that time as obedient to the ordinances of his faith, "circumcised the eighth day," living according to the strictest sect of his religion. "Concerning zeal," so filled with it, as to be actively opposed

to those whom he believed to be in the wrong. "As touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Of the Pharisee spoken of in the well-known parable, it is said, that he "went up into the Temple to pray;" and he himself declares that he fasted "twice in the week," and gave a tenth of all he possessed to the service of God. And these things, moreover, are nowhere condemned, but we are told that we must do *more* than these. The Scribes and the Pharisees had not received the Messiah; is it not meet, then, that those who call themselves Christians, should exceed them in holiness of life? But what a revelation is this! Well would it be if with our superior light, we even came up to what they were, and yet we are to exceed them! What are most of us doing? Where is the going up into God's House for private prayer? Where the fasting even *once* a week, as prescribed in

our Church ? Where the giving a tenth of our substance to God ? Where are those well-instructed in the Word of God ? those who have grasped the truth of Love to God and to their neighbour, where are the souls “ not far from the Kingdom ? ”

We said that before the Crown, must come the Cross, the battle before the victory, and so there must be a holy life here, if we would enter the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter. There must be the Life with Christ on earth, if there is to be the Life with Christ in Heaven. There must be the righteousness of Jesus clothing us, and the righteousness of Jesus working in us, and producing, by His Blessed Spirit, *Holiness of Life*.

Into the Heavenly City there shall in no wise enter “ anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.”

No evil words can enter there, no unkind thoughts, no impure thoughts, or words, or deeds; no cross, unkind tempers, no untruthfulness, no intemperance, no hatred or dishonesty, no sin. What, then, are we all doing? We have no time but the present moment to call our own, yet all these sins must be got rid of, if we would win Heaven and escape hell. Nay, more, we are to reckon ourselves *dead* to them, to *all* sin. Our choice must be made,—sin, with eternal death as the end thereof, or Holiness, with Eternal Life as the Reward thereof; these things are once more placed before us, and we must choose; we cannot remain neutral, we must choose either Life or death.

Shall we doubt for one moment. Shall we not choose Life, henceforward and for ever? We have within us by the gift of God, or within

our reach, that grace which will enable us, if we earnestly strive after it, to die unto sin. "Reckon ye yourselves, then, to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is Eternal Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."



Seventh Week after Trinity.



GRAFTING.

"I speak after the manner of men."—*Romans* vi. 19.

WHEN S. Paul used these words he was teaching Heavenly truths through language which could be easily understood, because, in order to express his meaning, he made use of figures of speech common amongst those who heard him. This, as you all know, was the method frequently adopted by our Blessed Lord Himself. We, then, will follow His example, and that of S. Paul, who trod so closely in the footsteps of his Lord, and taking the figure of speech used by our Church this week, will con-

sider what lesson we can draw from that process, no doubt familiar to many of you, I mean the process of *grafting*.

You will see this subject is mentioned in the Collect now under our consideration, and a beautiful and humiliating lesson indeed does it bring before us. For why should we there pray "*Graft* in our hearts the love of Thy Name?" Why, alas! but because it is not *natural* to us to love God's Name. This holy affection needs to be grafted upon us, inserted into us, by the Heavenly Husbandman of our souls. The thought of grafting will help us greatly to understand the Mystery of our Baptism. There, in that holy Ordinance, we were made "Members of Christ," that is, we were grafted into His Body, united to Him, that so, receiving our nourishment from Him, "The True Vine," we should grow, and flourish, and bear fruit, not of

ourselves, as you will see, but *only* and entirely because of our union with Him. In the Collect also, how beautifully the figure or parable of the graft is kept up : "Increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same." The graft must be nourished from the stock, and kept in its place therein, else it will soon die, as S. John so touchingly says, "Little children, *abide* in Him." It must *grow* also, in proof of its healthful union, and all this, as the prayer before us expresses it, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," by Whose grace alone, can we remain as true branches of the Vine, even unto the end. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me." From these words, and from our previous considerations, then, we find that the only proof of a graft or branch being in

vigorous union with the tree, is growth, budding forth, fruit-bearing ; and that we cannot look for these things, except there be this union. But in other verses of the Parable of the Vine we find an *advance* on all this ; we find there must be *much* fruit-bearing. Our Lord says, “ He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth *much* fruit ; so shall ye be My disciples.” Is it not so in this life ? A gardener thinks little of a branch which only bears leaves ; great show of early promise, of sweet blossoms, is but a small thing to him if it stops there ; a thin supply of meagre fruit even, does not satisfy him. What a skilful gardener toils for, looks for, hopes for, is *much* fruit-bearing ; he delights also in fruit well perfected, and thins out and cuts away all that may prevent its full growth, and hide it from the ripening warmth of the maturing sunshine,—“ He purgeth it, that it

may bring forth more fruit." And think you not that it is the same with God? No earthly husbandman ever looked day by day with such earnest, silent care, on the plants and trees committed to his charge, as that with which God beholds us. He watches, after He has grafted us in, to see how the branches grow, and bud forth, and what fruit they bear. What, then, must His grief be, when, after this long watching for fruit, He sees only wild fruit forming: "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

Such is the sorrow we cause our God, by unfruitfulness, by imperfection, by sin, when He looks for holiness, and finds only the wild fruits of the world, the flesh, and the devil,—those fruits which, as the Epistle expresses it, end but in "death," or the meagre undeveloped fruits of half-hearted service.

We have been speaking of our Blessed Lord as the one only Source of our life and nourishment in Heavenly things, and in the Gospel for the week we have, in the miracle of the seven loaves and few small fishes, a lively figure of the same, when we behold Him feeding with these the four thousand in the wilderness. This miracle, when taken in a spiritual sense, is full of the most tender beauty and teaching. In those days we are told the multitude was very great, and had nothing to eat ; and Jesus had compassion on them, lest they should faint, for divers of them had come from far. They were in the wilderness, but even there Jesus was able to feed them ; nay, more, it was only in the company of Jesus, and amongst His disciples, that there was any food to be had, and this only in small quantities, compared with the vast multitude to be fed. But Jesus blessed it, and it

became sufficient for that great multitude, even enough and to spare.

And now, in these days, is there not a very great multitude ? They are hungry and thirsty, weary, ready to faint, and they too are in the wilderness. But Jesus and His disciples are there also, and there He still prepares a rich table for the wayfarers. Only by Him, and through His ministers, is this bounteous Table furnished. Only by Him, and through His Priests, is this Table spread. A little bread is broken, a little wine poured forth, but it is blessed, and behold! the little becomes all-sustaining for the great multitude, and the riches of that Table are inexhaustible. There is our Baptismal union with Him strengthened ; there are we nourished from Him Who is the True Vine, and “ we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us.” So

we, even we, eat and are filled, and He then sends us away, that we may go abroad in the strength of that Meat, and glorify our Father in much fruit-bearing. But in this miracle there is not only the deep spiritual teaching we have been endeavouring to draw from it,—there is the most tender comfort for those who lack the necessaries of this life. Our Lord had compassion on the multitude, because they had nothing to eat. He had compassion on them; He knew what hunger was; He had felt it Himself. Do you think He *feels* less for His poor now than He did then? Nay, rather, He so loves them, so unites Himself with them, that He declares that an alms-deed done to them is done to Himself,—He and His poor are one. But are you His poor? Do you look to Him? Is He your dear Lord, your Master? Do you believe in Him, love, and serve Him? Do

you follow Him? These poor people in the wilderness, you will remember, had many of them come from far, and will you not come over a few fields, or along a few streets, in order to seek Him, and to be with Him in His House of Prayer? Will you not come to Him in all your need or sorrow, and tell it out to Him, or to His Ministers, that you may be helped and comforted. Is there any wonder that we are often so sore distressed, when we keep away from Him, and do not ask Him for "our daily bread." We know that God has promised all things needful, if we seek Him *first*; and even David says, "Saw I never the *righteous* forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." "Seek ye," then, "*first* the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."



Eighth Week after Trinity.



THE TWOFOLD PRAYER.

“Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him.”—*Romans* viii. 7.

IN the Collect for this week, two thoughts and two petitions seem to be combined in our prayer, namely, that God would “put away from us all hurtful things,” and “give us those things which be profitable for us.” How strikingly, in this wording, is our character as children again shown! We come before “our Father” helpless, as it were. We do not even ask here to be strengthened against that which is hurtful,

that *we* may put it from us. No, we ask God to do this ; we ask Him to put it away from us. Is it not so in the natural life ? Do we not see a watchful nurse, or a tender parent, put away from a child all that may be hurtful to it ? How powerless is it in itself to do this ! So, in the Collect, we throw ourselves, as it were, on our Heavenly Father, and entreat Him to avert the dangers which surround us, to put away all hurtful things from us. We also further beg that He will give us all that is good,—“those things which be profitable for us.” This is, as it were, looking for all from Him, knowing that He alone is the Source of every good and perfect gift ; and also it is being willing that He shall be the Judge as to what is profitable for us. Here, then, are some of the chief characteristics we should strive to possess,—entire dependance upon God as little children, and



entire submission to His Holy Will concerning us.

Now, as you all know, we were made God's children in Holy Baptism, and to-day's Epistle brings before us the further privilege which follows on our sonship in Christ Jesus. It shows us what our Church Catechism also teaches us, namely, our heirship,—how each one of us, that is, through Baptismal union with Christ, shares not only in the blessing of adoption, we are not only children of God, but "*inheritors* of the Kingdom of Heaven." As we hear to-day, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God; and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him." "*If so be that we suffer with Him.*" We have before spoken of the calling of Christians as being one of suffering. It must be so. We who are members of the Body of Christ, in union with the once Thorn-

crowned Head, the now Pierced Heart, and Hands, and Feet, how can we expect to live softly, easily, painlessly. We must suffer ; and unless we do, we cannot look for the Eternal Kingdom with Christ. If we suffer with Him we shall reign,—“ Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ : if so be that we suffer with Him.”

This is the condition,—*suffering*. And here we come to the question—If suffering be so necessary, how must we suffer ? First, in whatever way God sees fit for us. Suffering may be His answer to our prayer for all that is profitable to us ; ease may be that which to us is hurtful. God must be the Judge ; we must leave all in His Hands as to what we need ; and when we have done this, we must not be surprised, if our petitions are sometimes answered in a way, which to us seems strange, though afterwards, may be, we are permitted to

see His purpose. Thus, perchance, we ask for patience, and God sends us that which will work patience in us, if we submit to His Hand. Or we ask to love Him alone, and He takes from us those whom we love too dearly, that so our hearts may have Him only on which to rest. Or, we are proud, and ask to be made humble, and He sends us some infirmity which makes us dependent upon others. But all these are sufferings which God sends to us, as a loving Father correcting His children ; they are sent without our intention, so to speak. There is another kind of suffering, however, to which we must all willingly put ourselves, and that is, the suffering of overcoming our evil natures by God's good Spirit. It is this crucifixion of our sinful natures, of which the Epistle speaks, and in this process we must suffer, for in it we take each part of our corrupt will, as God shows it

to us, and nail it, as it were, with our own hands, to the Cross of the Will of God. This must be painful, it cannot be otherwise, for it is against our natural will. Yet it is this suffering we must go through, if we would hereafter inherit with Christ His Kingdom of Glory. Through this path of suffering it was that He entered Heaven, and we too must follow. "The disciple is not above his Master." We are joint-heirs with Christ, "if so be that we suffer with Him." "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." It is this mortifying, or slaying within us, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, all our evil desires, which causes our suffering, and to which we must bravely set to work. Like men we must put our shoulders to the wheel, and in this, as in all "labour," we shall soon perceive there is "profit"—profit in the present life, profit un-

·speakable in that which is to come. What wonder that when S. Paul was able to say "I am crucified with Christ," he was also able to rejoice with a great triumph and say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness."

Do you not see in all this, once more, how true it is that there is no victory without the battle, no Crown without the Cross having been first borne ? Do you not here see how we must not only *bear* our Cross, but also hang upon it if we would be like Jesus and His saints. O let us beware of anything short of the doctrine of the Cross,—the Cross of Christ for us, the Cross of Christ within us. Let us not be satisfied with mere *words*. The doing of the Will of God, is the only sure sign of the Life of God in the soul. "Not every one that saith unto

Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven." There is only one road to Heaven,—the way of holiness. That way begins in Justification through Christ by the Spirit, and is continued and ended through Christ by Sanctification of the Spirit. From first to last it is through Jesus only, but it is through Jesus in the way of holiness,—by the Spirit of the Father. And not only of the Father, but of *our* Father,—“For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” “And if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him.”



Ninth Week after Trinity.



THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples;
and they are written for our admonition."—1 Cor. x. 11.

IN reading the Old Testament history, of the wonderful dealings of God with His chosen people of Israel, we must not look upon the different trials and deliverances which were sent them, as belonging only to *their* history, or to their times, but as *types* of those things which should take place in years to come, amongst God's people, in their spiritual history, and so amongst ourselves, even in these days.

The Collect prays this week, that we may

ever have "the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful;" and the Epistle shews how necessary this petition is, by recounting to us many of the ways in which God's ancient Church went astray and displeased Him, and the awful judgments which followed on their sins. Then comes our Text, telling us all these things were ensamples or *types*, figures of what will happen to us if we sin like them, and therefore "written for our admonition."

The Gospel teaches us that we should take as much pains, and use as much foresight in our attempts to win the Eternal Prize, as worldly men do to secure wordly aims; as one would do who was cast out of house and home, and had nothing to depend on but his own quickness and ability. Now let us try and combine all this into the teaching for the week. First, as to the Collect, we pray to be always enabled



not only to think, but to *do* what is right. How needful is this prayer! Good thoughts indeed are good things, but they are of little worth unless they come forth in good deeds. It is often much easier to think only, than both to think *and do*. How many souls have been lost, because they only thought and did not *do*; but, as thinking must go before doing, we ask in the Collect for the spirit both to think good thoughts, and to do good deeds. Then, in the Epistle, as we have said before, we see the need of this prayer, since, by nature, we are as unstable in the ways of God, as were the Jews of old, who, although God had wrought out a mighty deliverance for them, and had brought them safely out of the land of Egypt, rebelled against Him over and over again, and grieved His Holy Spirit; and, is not this, though a sad picture, yet a true one of ourselves? God has, indeed,

translated us from the dominion of evil into the Kingdom of His Dear Son, and has surrounded us with means of grace, that we may be kept His own for ever. Yet we are constrained, every one of us, to cry, each time we kneel before Him, "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep." Now, in the Epistle, not only the wanderings of God's people are spoken of, but the consequences of their going astray are put before us. And these, indeed, it will be well for us to consider, for they are, as we have said before, warnings to us, that sin cannot go unpunished now, any more than in old-time, when, as we read again in the Epistle, "With many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples (or figures of ourselves) to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."

And what was the punishment sent of God, in all the cases of sin spoken of? The answer to this question is a very awful one. In every case it was *death*. The punishment was the same in every instance, though the offences were so various. In each case, whatever the sin, death was the punishment,—different kinds of death, indeed, but still death. Idolatry, fornication, tempting God to punish, by bold daring words, murmuring, discontent, all met with one end, one punishment—*death*. How awful is this lesson for us! Think of this all ye that forget God, all ye that sin by grievous open transgression. Think of this. Let us *all* think of it, all ye that murmur, or are discontented, or untrue. Let us think of this, all we who are unbelieving, or fearful, dishonest, unruly, or intemperate, or in any wise ungodly. For us, whatever be our sin, if it *is sin*, and sin

unrepented of, unsorrored for, unamended, there is but one end—*death*—and that *Eternal*. Think not, mine is but a small sin, only doing wrong sometimes, only doing a little wrong. The word still standeth sure, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

There shall be a time for all those *that repent not*, when their Lord shall come, that Lord, who sees all, and hears all, that passes in this world; and to each one, to each unfaithful soul, He will say, “How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.” Thou hast wasted my goods in riotous, or dishonest living, or thou hast let them lie useless, and hast not improved them; thou has thought to gain the world, but thou hast lost thy soul! How unspeakably awful. *Then* shall be no hope, no place of repentance, no time for turn-

ing to God. And it will then be found that Heaven has been lost, not for great sins only, but for little self-indulgences, little unfaithfulnesses, as unworthy of us, as was Esau's mess of pottage, for which he sold his birthright. Are there any who would gladly stop short of such a fearful end as we have been describing? If so, we would say to them, follow, in a *right* way, the example of the wicked steward, when he was turned away by his master for evil-doing. He who is in earnest, will leave no stone unturned to accomplish his end. The steward in the Gospel was a wicked man, but he was determined to make friends for himself, in the day of adversity, come what would. Shall we be less earnest in a good cause than he was in an evil? When men have a great purpose, whether good or bad, do they not apply themselves to it, do they not use all their abilities to bring it about?

And so it must be with us. Nay, more, we must *agonise* if we would enter Life Eternal. We must *flee* from the wrath to come, we must escape for our lives, we must fight manfully. But we must do more. We must think calmly, we must make our plans, we must look upon the attainment of eternal glory as the *Great Purpose of our lives*, we must live for it, labour for it, scheme for it, deny ourselves for it, rob ourselves, if need be, of sleep for it; aye, be ready to lay down our lives for it, if God so wills it; so that when this poor weak trembling body fails, and sleeps in death, the dear Lord Himself, Who redeemed it, and the blessed angels who rejoice over the returning penitent, may receive it into "Everlasting Habitations."



Tenth Week after Trinity.



THE WILL OF GOD.

"Dividing to every man severally as He will."—1 *Cor.* xii. 11.

[IN the Collect for this week, we are admitted to very deep teaching on the subject of prayer. We ask, "Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy humble servants ;" and then is put before us the Love of God, in withholding answers to our prayers if they would not be good for us ; for the Collect goes on to say, "That we may obtain our petitions, make us to ask such things as shall please Thee," implying that God in His Love will not answer our prayers, unless we ask such things as please Him, and are good for us. What, then, we should especially study in our petitions

is this, that in them we may ask nothing but what is agreeable to the Holy Will of God. And who would not have it so? What could be more awful than the thought that God would answer our prayers, whether He was pleased with them or no, whether they were good for us or not? If He did so, might we not fear lest we should be in the same case as Balaam, who provoked God to suffer him, in his madness and folly, to go on an unholy errand, which was followed by his death; or, as the children of Israel, when murmuring against God because of their desire for flesh meat, "He gave them their desire," but "sent leanness withal into their soul," and death as their fearful punishment. Is it not well, then, that we should carefully guard our prayers, lest we ask in them anything contrary to God's Will, or in a wrong spirit. So may the blessing spoken of by S. John be



ours,—“ If we ask anything, *according to His Will*, He heareth us.”

Now, all gifts of grace come from the Blessed Spirit, and it is God's Will that we should be *filled* with His Holy Influences. To one He gives this gift, to another that ; yet all “ worketh that One and the Self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.” Our part is then to cry most earnestly to God for the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost, *as He sees fitting for us*. He knows what we need, and what He desires for us. There are, indeed, some graces which we are sure He wills us to have, such as Love, Humility, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith. These we need have no fear in asking. Rather may we say to each petitioner,—

“ Thou art coming to a King,
Large petition with thee bring,
For His power and grace are such,
None can ever ask too much.”

But when we pray for any gift which we are not sure would be good for us, let us ever add to our prayers, "If it be Thy Will, O my God." And since this care is so needful when asking spiritual gifts, how much more is it necessary when we pray for temporal blessings! How short-sighted are we, how ready to ask what would be most injurious to us! And here again we are reminded of our likeness to children. Do not they constantly ask for things which would be hurtful or dangerous to them; nay which sometimes would actually risk their lives? They wish to have everything which is placed before them, and have not the power of discriminating what is good, and what is evil, like such as they are. Well might S. Paul say when speaking of spiritual gifts, "Brethren would not have you *ignorant*;" and well may we pray in the Litany that God would for

us, not only our sins, but our *ignorances* also, lest our want of knowledge in the ways of God lead us into mistakes, or danger, or death. But we should do more than pray, we should act also. A Christian should ever be striving to *overcome* that for which he asks forgiveness ; he must ask for the grace of victory, as well as for the grace of pardon, and then he must *strive* ; he must do what in him lies to bring about the answer to his prayers ; he must work as if all depended on him, and trust as if all depended on God. So when we see, or feel, or pray against our spiritual ignorance, we must strive to overcome it. We must be more careful in the study of Heavenly things, and in all connected with our Christian course ; more diligent in our attendance upon, and use of, every means of grace ; more eager to seek instruction ; more attentive to the Ministers of God's Holy Word.

There are many kinds of ignorance,—that which is not in the way of instruction, *that which will not be instructed*, and others. It was ignorance that would not be instructed, which led Jerusalem to the awful sin of rejecting her Lord. He Himself says in the Gospel, whilst weeping over the beautiful and beloved City, "*If Thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace!*" Whereas, instead thereof, Jerusalem was as the wicked spoken of in the fiftieth Psalm, who hated instruction and cast God's words behind them; and therefore was her end shame, and the reproof of the Most High. "Now consider this," ye that are wilfully ignorant, ye that despise the Word of God, and carelessly forget Him, "consider this," lest, in the awful language of the Psalmist, He "pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you."

“None to deliver!” What a dreary, hopeless sound these words have! Yet most surely it is so, if we are not under the protection and favour of God, if we are not in the path of His Will. For though, if He is for us, none can be against us, yet if He is against us there are none that can be for us. And why? Because above all our wilfulness and sin, above all power, above all that can be named in Heaven and in earth, *One* reigns supreme, Blessed for evermore,—One Will rules, even the perfect Will of God. And since it is so, our happiness, our peace must be bound up in the fact of our will being made one with God’s Will. If it is not so with us, if our desires, our resolutions, our wills, are running in opposition to God’s Will, there is but one end for us, we shall be cast out and destroyed, and there will be “*none to deliver!*”

In the Gospel we see this truth very strikingly

brought out. In our Lord's time we are there told that some had gone so far in sin, or in ignorance, that they had defiled the very Temple of God; His Will as expressed in His Word they had forgotten, or despised, or been ignorant of, and what was their punishment? Jesus Himself "*cast them out.*" The Holy City, as we have seen, withstood the Will of God, and lightly regarded the coming of our Lord, and what was her doom? "They shall not leave in thee one stone upon another;" because *thou knewest not* the time of thy visitation." So shall it be with all the unrepentant sinners, and the wilfully ignorant. There shall be "none to deliver." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But this is not the Will of God. He would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth. It is not the Will of the Father that one should perish.

Jesus has come to seek and to save. He is calling to each one this day, "Come unto Me." "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." "*Learn* of Me." And will you not come, will you not be taught of God, of Him Whose Will it is that we should be not only a *saved*, but a *holy* people. Will you not place yourselves under the Good Shepherd's care, Who hath said that such shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His Hand?



Eleventh Week after Trinity.



MORE THAN CONQUERORS.

"I laboured more abundantly than they all."—1 Cor. xv. 10.

THE Collect for this week seems to point out to us the great truth, that God's Will for us, is not only that we should follow Him *a little* way on the Path of Life. We are not merely called to do what is barely necessary to salvation, to bring forth only just enough fruit to prove our life; but we are to follow on *to the end*, we are to *run* the way of His Commandments, we are to bear *much* fruit to the glory of His Holy Name.

In the Epistle this thought is carried out in

the life of S. Paul. God's grace, he says, was not bestowed on him in vain. He was not simply a chosen and faithful Apostle, but he "laboured more abundantly than they all." And in another place he says, "Are they Ministers of Christ? . . . I am more; in labours more abundant." In the Collect, then, and in the Epistle, we seem to have placed before us, the abundant grace of God, to which we should aspire; that not only we should be *saved* by it, but that we should *glorify* in our lives our Heavenly Father.

There is, however, in the Epistle, another text which links its teaching on to that of the Gospel. It is this, "Yet not *I but the grace of God* which was with me." How beautiful this is! You see S. Paul was quite able, not only to realize his zeal in the service of his Lord, but to confess with child-like truth and humility, that

it was not of himself that he had so laboured ; “ not I,” he says, “ but the grace of God.” And how does this link the Epistle to the Gospel ? The Gospel contains our Lord’s well-known parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. And why did our Lord speak this parable ? The beginning of the Gospel tells us,—“ Jesus spake this parable unto certain that *trusted in themselves* that they were righteous.” These, then, to whom Jesus spake, were the exact opposites of the character of S. Paul ; for he attributed all his grace, and all his labours to God alone, while they “ trusted in *themselves* that they were righteous.” There is another point, too, which we must notice. The people to whom our Lord spoke, not only “ trusted in themselves that they were righteous,” but they “ *despised others.*”

Now let us compare with them S. Paul’s words in the Epistle. He knew he had laboured more

earnestly than the other Apostles, and he gave God the glory for it ; but did he despise his fellow labourers ? Not so ; rather he says, in his deep humility, “ I am the *least of the Apostles*, that am not meet to be called an Apostle.” But there is yet another comparison, infinitely beautiful, between the history of S. Paul and the narrative of the Gospel. Why was it that he was so humble, that he accounted so little of himself ? Why, but because in the midst of all his progress in grace, he remembered the time when, instead of fighting for his Lord, he had fought against Him. S. Paul was the saint he was because of his true penitence,—“ I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, *because I persecuted the Church of God.*” But what is there like this in the Gospel ? What in the narrative there spoken, to those who “ trusted in themselves that they were

righteous and despised others," which we can compare with this? First, we must note, that those to whom the parable was spoken, are figured in the character of the Pharisee. He too, as S. Paul, had a real superiority over many others, for, as has been before remarked, he did far more than many of us do, in prayer, and almsgiving, and fasting. But, unlike S. Paul, he did not in the least see his *own* nothingness, and so being on a pinnacle of self-righteousness, he was not contented with congratulating himself on his own position, but he must even add to this the despising of others,—“ God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are . . . or even as this Publican.” And what was there in the character of the Publican like that of S. Paul? The similarity was in this: both were true penitents, both truly humble, both fully conscious of their sin. S. Paul's language

was—"I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief.*" And what was the prayer of the Publican, what his attitude, what his conduct and confession? "And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!" *He* could not despise others, who knew so well his own sin. S. Paul could not look down on others, who felt himself the chief of sinners; not only the least of the Apostles, but not meet to be called one.

And now let us notice the conclusion of the Gospel. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It was so in both the cases before us. The chief of sinners, in his own estimation, be-

came one of the chief of saints in God's Sight ; and the poor Publican, who could only call himself "a sinner," who recommended himself to God by nothing but his great need of mercy and help, "went down to his house justified" rather than the Pharisee, who thanked God that he was not as the Publican ! How then must all this be applied to us ? Thus, surely. It is here shown us that we must press forward to do all that in us lies to glorify our God, but in order that we may do this, we must be grounded in humility. If we would ever be truly holy, we must be truly penitent. If we would be exalted we must first abase ourselves. We must ask God for the spirit of S. Paul the penitent, and for the spirit of the Publican ; and when, as they, we obtain mercy, then, and only then, can we run the way of God's Commandments. It is the repentant and forgiven soul alone, which can

be more than conqueror, more abundant in labours and in much fruit-bearing. It is only the light which shines through tears of penitence, which truly glorifies our Heavenly Father. Remember they are S. Paul's words which head this Reading ; he who felt himself the chief of sinners was the Apostle who was able to grasp the thought of being more than conqueror. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the Mighty Hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." "For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."



Twelfth Week after Trinity.



THE ABUNDANCE OF MERCY.

“Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward.”

2 Cor. iii. 4.

THE main object of the Collect for this week seems to be to direct our thoughts to the abundant mercy of our God; not merely to His goodness, but to His *abundant* goodness. In this view we will take the text. The gifts of our Heavenly Father are rich, overflowing, unmeasured. He answers not only the letter, but the spirit of our prayers; nay, more than we can ask or think, “more than either we desire or deserve.” So we read in the passage before

us, He makes His Apostles not only Ministers, but *able* Ministers of the New Testament. He makes that Testament not only saving, but "glorious." All through Holy Scripture we see proofs of this great out-pouring of Divine Mercy; and in our own lives how often, if we would only look for it, should we be enabled to trace the lavish and superabundant working of God's Love. He not only sends answers to our prayers, but sends them to us, with the utmost tenderness and consideration for our circumstances, showing the delight it is to our Heavenly Father to rejoice His children's hearts, when He can do so, consistently with their good.

Let us pass on now to the narrative of the Gospel for the week, and see how we can there trace the abundance of mercy. Our Lord, we are told, had come in His journeying to the



Sea of Galilee, and it would seem from the words which follow, that He was surrounded by a multitude of persons. Many, probably, followed Him from curiosity; many for purposes of healing; a few were His faithful followers. But doubtless He was harrassed and pressed by the crowd; wearied, may be, with His journey; longing, perchance, for quiet and repose. Yet in the midst of all the mental strain upon Him, and the exhaustion consequent on the perpetual going forth of virtue and healing; never turning one poor needy soul away, but considering them with the utmost love and tenderness. So we find it in the case before us. In the midst of all we have been describing, a poor sufferer was brought to our Lord, who "was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech." We may imagine how confused and sensitive he must have felt at thus being brought before the multitude, afflicted

with such sad infirmities, unable to speak plainly for himself, unable to hear the gentle Voice of his Lord. And mark the request of his friends : "They beseech Him to put His Hand upon him." They do not ask that he should be healed, but they ask our Lord to "put His Hand upon him." This He does literally, and adds thereto the abundance of mercy. You will remember the poor man was deaf ; touch and sight were the only ways of communication open to him, since he was dumb likewise. And how tender was our Lord's dealing with him, how thoughtful His treatment of him, how minute His care ! He might have merely laid His Hands on him in blessing, or He might have said at once, "Be thou healed." But it was not so. First, he must be led away from the crowd, perhaps, by a gentle touch from His Own Hand, since we read, "*He took* him aside

from the multitude." Then He touches the ears and tongue of the sufferer ; He takes trouble for him, and in the retirement which He chose for this miracle of healing, prolongs the cure by many tender actions of Love. His Word is not yet " Be thou healed ;" but when He touched the defective parts, He looked up to Heaven and sighed ; heavy-hearted may be, with the weight of sin and suffering around Him, and said, "*Ephphatha*, that is, Be opened, and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." Was not the Lord in all this more ready to hear than were the petitioners to pray, and, as His wont is, did He not give more even than was desired ?

But we must again pass on. The case of this poor man was one of bodily infirmity, but in the latter part of the Collect we pray for the

removal of spiritual infirmities, and of impediments in our Christian course. We ask God saying, "Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen." And if we really make the prayer of this beautiful Collect our own, we need not fear, for "the same Lord over all is" still "rich unto all that call upon Him." His abundant grace is still poured forth. But do we bring our infirmities to Him? If so, we shall indeed find the "riches of His Goodness" are inexhaustible. He does more than pardon,—He gives healing, He takes away the infirmity, and gives the opposing health. What a lesson of comfort for the weak and wavering, for the infirm in faith, for the slow of

speech in Heavenly things, for the scrupulous and troubled in conscience. There is no minute particular of your case which He will not consider *if you come to Him*. Your weakness may take refuge in His Power, your fears can be set at rest by His grace, your scruples be overshadowed by His great Love. Ah! if we would only not hold off from our Lord in trouble, if we would think about our difficulties less, and pray about them more; if we would tell them to Jesus, who can say how soon we should have relief! He loves to speak the word "Ephphatha, . . . Be opened," in answer to our prayers; to throw wide the doors of His Goodness, and to pour down upon us the Abundance of Mercy.

But there is another very special lesson to be thought of in conclusion. It is this. We should pray more for each other than we do, The

poor man in the Gospel could not speak plainly for himself, but his friends brought him to Jesus, and *spoke for* him, and their prayers were *more* than answered. How is it with us? When any of our neighbours are in trouble, do we speak to God in prayer for them? Do we beseech Him to put His Hand of Love upon them? Alas! I am afraid many of us pray too little for ourselves, and that those who do pray, are so taken up with their own needs before God, that they have little time to think of the sorrows of others. Yet, remember, it was when Job "*prayed for his friends,*" that his own captivity was turned. So when the Lord fills your neighbour's heart with joy, in answer to your prayers, fear not that *you* will be sent empty away. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."



Thirteenth Week after Trinity.



THE GIFT OF GOD.

“ God gave it to Abraham by promise.”—*Gal.* iii. 18.

“ EVERY good gift, and every perfect gift is from above.” This is a truth we cannot too deeply impress upon our minds. It is to be feared that we are all apt to forget it. We do not remember as we ought, that all our *natural* gifts even, are from God ; our very selves are His wonderful workmanship ; our talents, our abilities, our skill, are all from Him, we have no good qualities which originated in ourselves, all come from Him. And if this be the case in our *natural* lives, how much more

so in the Life not of this world. From first to last, our spiritual Life is the gift of God ; and, as the Collect expresses it, when that Life is given, it is still only His gift, which enables us to do unto Him "true and laudable service." We must especially notice this term "gift," ; it teaches us very deep lessons ; for, if Eternal Life is a gift, no exertions on our part can possibly attain to it. You cannot earn a gift. If you earned Life Eternal, it would not be a *gift*, it would be *wages*. We received a share, or a measure of this gift, when as helpless infants, we were brought to Holy Baptism ;—this grace was given to us when we could not possibly do anything to *earn* it. We were made inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven by God's free gift. It was with us, as with Abraham, to whom He *gave* the inheritance by promise. Perhaps then some will say, " If all this be true, how is it that

so many parts of Holy Scripture speak of the *reward* of faithful service?" The reply is this : God does indeed bless and reward His people, His obedient children, but He must first make them faithful, He must first lead them to obedience, and adopt them as His children. His grace must be given, before we can do anything so as to please Him. And this He can and does give, without respect of rank, or age, or person, or nation. Everywhere, in all circumstances, God's grace can work mightily, as He pleases. None can say, "Only such as I am, can receive the grace of God." Those who lived before the Law, those under the Law, those after the Law, alike are capable of His mercy. There is another thought too it is well to consider. Let not any think that their peculiar position in the Church of God can save them, or justify them before Him ; except they have within the true evidence of

Life, shown forth in deeds of Love and Charity. Remember how often we have spoken of this before, we can hardly do so too often : for

“ Love is Life’s only sign.”

S. John gives it as such : “ We know that we have passed from death unto Life, *because we love the brethren.*” You may call yourself a Church person, or this, or that ; but you are only to be considered true, that is, living members of Christ, in so far as you are *loving*.

Let us note the lesson of the Gospel. A certain traveller we are told, who was journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, by whom he was stripped, and cruelly handled ; so much so, that he was left by the way-side “ half dead.” One would have supposed that anyone, much more any calling themselves the people of God, would if passing, have turned aside to see what could be done



for the poor wounded traveller. Perhaps we all think we should have been sure to help him ; do not let us be too sure. We know not what we are made of, until we are tried, and unless we are daily living in a spirit of humble, fervent charity, we have no reason for thinking, that in a great case of need, we should be found ready with loving words and self-denying actions, even though we may call ourselves by the name of Him Who is Himself Love.

How was it in the parable before us ? The traveller was lying by the road-side, bleeding and fainting, his life slowly ebbing away. But there came a sound upon the road, and, it may be, he raised his failing eyes, secure that now help was at hand. Alas ! not so, the foot-steps moved on, and their sound was soon lost in the distance. And yet he who so acted, most sad thought, was a priest of God ; but he had for-

gotten his high commission, and when he saw the poor creature by the way, we read, "he passed by on the other side." Again the silence was broken, there was a step as of one approaching; perchance now the suffering traveller knew nothing of what was taking place, for he had been left so long unaided, we may suppose hope must have almost died away, and consciousness become still more dim. This time it was a Levite who came on his journey,—one especially set apart for the service of God, yet he did even worse than the first, for we read, he "came and looked on him," and then "passed by on the other side." But another still, a third wayfarer, now drew near to the wounded man. Who was he? A despised Samaritan, one whom, probably, the Priest and the Levite, would not have deigned to look upon, or touch, "for," as we read, "the Jews have no dealings



with the Samaritans." And what did this man do? Did he pass by on the other side? O! no. He forgot all in his compassion, there was nothing he spared, in order to aid the half dying sufferer. He himself bound up his wounds, "pouring in oil and wine," and used his own beast to carry him to a place of safety.

Arrived there, he himself ministered to him, or, as in the beautifully simple words of our Lord's narrative, "He took care of him." Even on the morrow, when obliged to proceed on his own journey, the Samaritan did not leave his work half done, but provided means for the support of the sick man, placing a sum of money for him in the hands of the host of the inn, with the charge that he should attend to him, and providing that if the supply he had left, should prove insufficient, he would make good afterwards any further expenditure. Which,

then, of these three travellers, had within them the Gift of Love? Not the Jewish Priest, for if he had, he would not have "passed by." Not the Levite, adding idle, cold curiosity, to the hard-heartedness of the first. But the despised Samaritan, who when he saw him, had compassion. He only was worthy to be called his "Neighbour," he only acted as one of God's true people. And for ourselves, what is the lesson? We are baptized Christians, called by the Name of the Lord. All set apart under the "Sign of the Cross," for God's special service. We are to renounce all evil, to believe and do all good—and unless we do, the Gift of God in Holy Baptism will profit us nothing. It will not avail us that we are baptized, if, as we journey through this world, on our way, we pass by the needy and sorrowful and helpless, and take no notice of the work God has given us to do.

Are there any lying sick or suffering, at our own doors as it were, who need our helping hand, but whom yet for some cause we pass by—have we any grudge against them, are we too proud, or may be too unforgiving, to help them? If so our danger is terrible. For as we do to them, it shall be done to us. And perchance, as we pass by, and miss our opportunity of serving God in them, another will draw near, as did the Samaritan, and, by his deeds of love, take our place. Remember the words of Jesus, the comment which He made, on the Parable of the good Samaritan; it is the only safe one for us —“Go and do *thou* likewise.”



Fourteenth Week after Trinity.



THE LOVE OF THE COMMANDMENT.

“They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh.”—*Gal. v. 24.*

THESE words are very startling ones. St.

Paul does not say “They that are Christ’s *will* crucify the flesh.” He says they *have* done so. What a test is this, by which each one of us may try ourselves! Perhaps we should feel not only surprised, but offended, if any one asked us, “Do you belong to Christ?” And yet, which of us has this mark, which is spoken of in the text, as the common mark of all Christ’s people, namely, the crucifixion of the flesh, with the affections and lusts?

What does crucifixion signify? It signifies nailing to a Cross ; so that in the passage before us, we must understand, that they who are indeed and in truth the people of God, have renounced the lusts of the flesh, in such a manner, that to them they have become powerless, just as the limbs of one nailed to a Cross have no power of motion or of use. But there is much more in this wonderful passage to consider. We know that very few of us have attained even to the condition we have been describing. And yet there is a further state to which we should all aspire, I mean “a *death* unto sin.” And crucifixion is not death. We know our Blessed Lord, hung for hours upon the Cross, Crucified, yet still living. The victory was not gained until He died, but crucifixion was the path to death, which He willed to tread for us. And so, in like manner if we would



closely follow Him, we must, as it were, willingly suffer the pains of our spiritual crucifixion, that by a death unto all sin, we may at length be made like unto Him, free from its power.

If *one* unhallowed desire of the flesh still reigns in us, our crucifixion is not yet accomplished, and we then have reason indeed to fear, whether we in truth belong to Christ at all. Now there are two things which I think probably keep back many of us, perhaps most, from that spiritual crucifixion or discipline of which we have been speaking. First we do not *love* the commandment which bids us be the disciples or scholars of Christ,—such as “Take My Yoke upon you,” “Learn of Me.” And secondly, we do not embrace, or understand how we are to use our Cross—how it is, to it, and on it, that our flesh must be crucified. And here

let us pause for a moment. Do you notice, I say *our* Cross ?

Just look back once more in thought to the first Good Friday. What Cross did Jesus bear to Calvary ? It was *His Own*. On which was He Crucified ? *On His Own*. He did not choose His Cross, He did not change it. No. That which was given to Him by His Heavenly Father, He bore ; on it He was Crucified, on it He died. And so it must be, as we shall afterwards show, with ourselves.

But to return. You will clearly see, on consideration, that the suffering and disciplined life to which we are called, and the service of God to which we are bound, must be contrary to our whole unregenerate being, and cannot be in accordance with our natural will. We need a New Nature, and we need that this New Nature should be stronger than the old one, before we

can love God's Will, or make much progress in His Ways. We have all had the seed of this New Nature given to us in holy Baptism. But have we nourished it, is it every day springing forth, and increasing in strength, are we praying daily more and more earnestly for an "increase of Faith, Hope and Charity," and for a great Love of the Commandments of God? If we *loved* to do God's Will, how quickly should we run in the way. If we *loved* to curb our desires, and to bring them into subjection, for the Love of God, how soon should we become holy persons! O let us pray more earnestly for the love of His Will, and for a hatred of all sin.

And now once more as to the second lesson before mentioned. On what Cross must we seek to Crucify the desires of the flesh, and every other evil thing? May we choose our Cross? May we say, "I cannot serve God

where I am, I cannot overcome my sins where I am placed, I could do better anywhere else, I should like to change places with so-and-so?" No. Do you think if our Blessed Lord had changed His Station on Calvary for any other, that the Will of God would ever have been perfectly fulfilled; do you think we should have been saved? No. "*The Cup which My Father has given me* shall I not drink it?" None other, only *that Cup*, could ever have satisfied the demands of our God. So it must be with us. The station God has placed us in we must keep, until He Himself leads us to another—the cross He has given us, we must bear, on that cross we must hang, even unto death; the cup He gives us we must drink. You—we all, have crosses; that is to say, trials, some more, some less, as it pleases God; but, great or small, it is in bearing our cross patiently and lovingly, it is

by daily using it as a means to crucify the flesh, that we shall daily grow in the Life of God. All this however, we cannot understand or love of ourselves. We must pray earnestly the prayer of the Collect, "and, that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to *love* that which Thou dost command ; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And what is the Promise? Look into the Epistle. If we walk in the Spirit, in this life even, there is rich reward. Victory over sin ; "Love, Joy, Peace!" And hereafter, in the Kingdom of God above, there are we know crowns of glory, songs of blessedness, palms of victory, eternal joy, which fadeth not away ! O ask that you may *love* the will of God, and that you may see and embrace *your own cross*, remember that only those who love the Commandment, obtain the Promise, and they only

who learn in the school of Christ, can enter into the Joy of their Lord.

In Him is all power to pardon, cleanse, and enlighten you. Whatever be your need, He is able and willing to supply it. Come then unto Him, as we read those ten poor sufferers came to Him, in the Gospel ; you know how merciful He was to them ; fear not but that He will also graciously receive you, if you come unto Him with earnestness, faith, and humility, crying from the bottom of your heart " Jesus, Master, have mercy." The Gospel for the week, seems specially to speak to *villagers*. We read, " He entered into a certain village." And how often does He do so still ! How often does He speak to us in quiet spots like this ! In the calm sweet evenings, in the fragrant meadows, in the waving cornfields, in the rippling of the water, in the songs of birds, in the quiet shining

of the stars, we may hear the Voice of Jesus if we will but listen, calling us to Himself, and raising our thoughts to Him "by Whom all things were made."

Sometimes also He speaks to us in a sterner Voice. He comes perchance to some cottage door with deep sorrow, because His Voice of mercy has been disregarded ; or He comes in a long illness, to try the faith of His chosen ones, or to make us by His Grace examples of patience in adversity ; or He comes to us in misfortune ; in the blighting of the waving corn, in the drought, or in the mildew, because we have not praised Him for the plenty which has filled our store-houses, we have not looked to, and fed on Him Who is the true Bread of Life. O pray that He may never come to you, save in mercy ; that when next He enters this village, by any special visitation, it may not be in wrath, but in

love. Let us live, so as not to fear His Coming, and when He comes in love, let us not forget to thank Him. Only one of the ten who were healed, as recorded in the Gospel, returned when he was healed to praise God : was not the conduct of the unthankful nine, enough to cause the return of their leprosy ? And yet alas ! while we think it ungrateful to receive favours from others, without thanking them, still, though all day long God is pouring out His Love upon us, we do not thank Him as we ought. Let us follow the example of the thankful leper ; and whenever we realize the mercy of our God, let us be ready to turn and glorify Him, remembering that He hath said " Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me" and that " it is a pleasant and joyful thing to be thankful."



Fifteenth Week after Trinity.



DOUBLE SERVICE.

“No man can serve two masters.”—*St. Matthew* vi., 24.

THESE are the words of Jesus Christ Himself, and form the beginning of the Gospel for the week.

They are very solemn words for us. Because, perhaps, there is no danger into which we more easily fall, than the attempt to render a double service, the fruitless endeavour to “serve two masters.” We believe in part, and so we in a measure serve God, but we also strive to keep friends with the world, or to indulge ourselves

in selfish pleasures, or we allow ourselves to idolize some person or possession, and vainly imagine that we shall be able to do all this, and still come right at the last, still please God. This, however, is impossible since His own word declares "Ye cannot serve God *and Mammon*," "No man can serve two masters." Now this, our special temptation, is aimed at in the collect, where we ask God to keep His Church because that without Him "the frailty of man cannot but fall."

And what does frailty mean? Weakness of resolution, instability of mind, and such are the characteristics of man's nature, as regards spiritual things, without the constant grace of God. Left to himself he is as nothing; lukewarm in religion, he is as we shall see, double-minded, and "unstable in all his ways." It is only a thorough hearty conversion to God

which sets the will of man firmly in the right direction. Notice a person who is half-hearted in religion ; his natural will is shaken, but not broken, and established by grace ; his spiritual will, is weak and unstable. One day he takes his stand for God, another he is pursuing his own will. He is miserable and happy in turns, you know not where you may next find him.

It is a most sad sight to see any soul thus tossed to and fro between God's Will and self-will. O how should we pray for such an one, that by a determined choice, and the Grace of God he may be stablished, strengthened and settled for ever, in the service of his Lord. May the very thought of a divided heart, such as we have been describing, spur us on to make our choice, now and for evermore, that we may give ourselves wholly to do and suffer God's Will and His Will only !

In the Epistle for this week we have a noble instance of simple-minded service in the case of St. Paul. There was no mistake about his one love,—his one object in life. His Master's service, his Master's honour, were dearer to him than his own life. He not only served his Lord but he *gloried* in so doing. In the accounts we read of him in Holy Scripture we are struck with the fact, that he never seems to have one thought but that of working for, and pressing forward in, the cause of his Master, whether it be as regards his own soul, or the Church, or the world.

There were those in the early days of Christianity, who desired to escape the persecution consequent on believing in Jesus, by endeavouring to keep faith with those who followed the Law, as well as to be of the company of Christians. This was only another attempt to serve



two masters—and also betokened a want of courage and bravery in confessing Christ. They were ashamed of the Cross, or rather they wanted to be Christians, and yet not to bear the Cross. But St. Paul's spirit was roused at the very thought; he could none of this, rather he breaks forth in those wonderful words which thrill through the heart of every true Christian, as the very war-cry of the Lord's faithful soldiers,—“God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” “That which is your shame is my boast, be not half-hearted but declare boldly for the Lord!”

In the Gospel from which the text is taken, the warning against double-service is to be found after another manner. Here the two masters are God, and over-carefulness for the things of this life. How many fall into this

last snare! How often do we all err in distrustful thoughts of God. We forget that He is our *Father*. And does not the good and watchful parent provide for his children, how much more, then, will God do this? "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Do you not see that the aim of all this teaching is to show us how single-hearted we should be? I have often thought how wearying it is to have the mind and heart divided, as it were, into many portions, many affections, many thoughts. How restful, on the contrary, is the repose of one aim, one overflowing love, one desire, one work.

Let us think what the great Saints of God have said concerning this. Daniel says "*One* thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require, even that I may dwell in the House of

the Lord all the days of my life." St. Paul writes "*One* thing I do, I press toward the mark." St. James says "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways"—and he warns such to purify their hearts by drawing nigh to God. After all, what is the true reason of the teaching of these passages of Holy Writ, what is the true cause of these yearnings and purposes of the soul, of these warnings and directions of the different sacred writers we have quoted? What is it? but the natural desire for, and necessity of, the return to God, of the souls and bodies which were made for Him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy soul and with all thy strength." "This is the first and great commandment," it is God's command, and also our only true happiness. For as another Saint cries, "Thou hast made all things for Thyself, and our heart is restless

till it resteth in Thee." "Take my heart, Lord, for I cannot give it to Thee, keep it, for I cannot keep it for Thee." "One thing have I desired!" to love Thee, O my God, perfectly, to serve Thee truly, to please Thee constantly, to look to Thee continually, to listen to Thy Voice unceasingly, to dwell with Thee everlastingly, to know Thee as Thou art to all eternity. "One thing have I desired!" What, then, is the especial lesson which to-day we are to take home to ourselves? It is this, that God will not accept of a divided service, and that our aim must therefore be a single one if we would succeed in our profession as Christians. In the affairs of this life, when a man chooses his trade or his profession, do we not all know that if he would succeed he must stick to it—do we expect to see him going from one master to another, from one trade to another?

If he did this, we should all feel pretty sure what his end would be. "A rolling stone gathers no moss." If this homely proverb be true of worldly things, how much more so as regards the things of God. For it is possible in the first case that a change of profession and of masters might succeed, but in spiritual matters this could never be. There is no success, no salvation, out of God, we must either serve Him or Satan, there is no middle course, either for our salvation, our happiness, or our Christian perfection.

If we long for joy and peace, for freedom and absence of care, if we long for holiness, for pardon and deliverance from sin, we must turn from all but God, we must leave all for Him. We must have Daniel's one desire, St. Paul's one determination. We must follow St. James' counsel and draw nigh to God

for grace and strength, that He may enable us to cast aside all double-mindedness and have but one aim and end, the perfect Will of our God.



Sixteenth Week after Trinity.



THE CHURCH THROUGHOUT ALL AGES.

"The whole family in heaven and earth."—*Ephes.* iii. 15.

YOU know, all of you, that there are many great and deep truths in our holy religion, which, although we may not be able to understand, we are nevertheless called upon to believe. And there are in these various articles of faith a great many different sides to the Truth. Each and every part of the Truth is true, but there are many and divers aspects of it. And here we are reminded of a great and grievous danger into which multitudes of persons fall. They, according to their character or

position, see some of these portions of the Truth easier than others, and they pick and choose, unconsciously, perhaps, to themselves, which part of true doctrine they will believe. We are, perhaps, all too ready to do this ; for it requires a sincere, humble mind, and careful study of God's Will, to be enabled to grasp the whole truth ; above all, it needs an abundant outpouring of the Blessed Spirit of God. And yet, it is to this we must all aspire ; not merely must we content ourselves with a small portion, but we must have the *whole* truth.

Now, this week's teaching will require us to receive a truth of which perhaps before we have thought little. If you notice, both in the Collect for last week, and for this, an expression is used which we have not before had in any of the Collects since Trinity Sunday,—I mean the expression "the Church," and "Thy Church."

You will remember we before said that Trinity-tide might be described as a time of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." It is alike the ripening season of the soul, and the concluding portion of the teaching in the Church's year. We must expect, then, during this time, to have, as it were, the finishing touches given to our knowledge,—to be expanded, indeed, and carried out all our lives long, but yet, in a measure, given to us perfected. For the Church of God gives one year of complete instruction to her children, to be studied and lived over and over again, so long as God spares us here.

And what an inexhaustible mine of wealth is thus opened to us! Who, in the longest life, was ever able to say, "I have exhausted the Church's Treasury!" Rather, do we not find that they who search the most diligently, and who drink the most deeply of this well of holy

knowledge, are ever finding therein new delight, new riches, and fresh springs of grace. We, however, have not yet gone through the whole year in these readings, and therefore must expect still to find an ever-increasing depth and height of knowledge presented to us ere we reach its close.

This week we come to the consideration, more especially, of the Church of God itself, since there is no mention at all in the Collect of separate individual persons, but the whole prayer is one of wide charity, embracing the entire Church of God. And now it is very necessary that we should understand what His Church really is. First, we must remember, it is one, yet not all in one place. One, because though many have gone before us to their rest yet are they still of the same body, still belonging to the Church of God, still of His family.

as we see in the text, "The whole family *in heaven and in earth.*" It is not all in one place, because, as we have seen, there are two great companies in the Church,—the one on earth, still struggling, still fighting, that is *militant*; the other, resting from the struggle and the toil, waiting for its full consummation and bliss, in the Church triumphant, when the number of God's people shall be fulfilled. Thus we see there is a visible and an invisible Church. What then is the visible Church? Since it is very evident that we should seek to assure ourselves that we are included in this body, if we would hope to be saved, *and to receive the fulness of God's Truth and Blessing.* The visible Church of God, is that Body of faithful men, wherein the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's Ordinance. In



other words, it is the company of those who, as regards motives, are banded together, with only one intention,—the study and practice of the perfect Will of God,—not a part of that Will only, but the *whole* Counsel of God. For this Body we pray in the Collect; so dear should it be to us,—so dear we know it is to God, that we ask that His continual pity may cleanse and defend it. How wonderful and full of help is the thought of the Church of God, if we belong to Her! for then we are not alone whether in joy or sorrow. Rather, we are one of a great company, one of “the whole family in heaven and earth;” and when one member suffers or rejoices all the other members rejoice or suffer with it. Moreover, when our dear ones are taken from the Church visible, and having crossed the river of death, pass over the other side, we are still one with them and th

with us, still of the same Body, still one in hope, and faith, and love.

Now this Church of God is not only of the past, or of the present, but it belongs to all future ages ; and the special charge of the Church, and the duration of this charge, are both spoken of in the Epistle. We read there S. Paul's words, speaking of the whole Church, and earnestly desiring, as it were, that in her, throughout all ages, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

First, then, the great treasure of the Church, her great charge, is the glory of God,—the glory of God, as shown forth in the person and work of Christ Jesus Himself, "God, manifest in the flesh," for the salvation of the world. Surely there is great need for us all to remember more than we do the thought of God's Glory. We are most of us so taken up with the care of our own concerns, whether bodily or spiritual,

that we have little time for the thought of God. We may take a lesson to-day from the Gospel in this matter, whilst meditating on our Blessed Lord's miracle of raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain. The end of the account is a very remarkable one. The multitude around our Lord must have been one of a very mingled character; yet we read that the two special effects wrought upon them, by the miracle of mercy there recorded, were a holy fear, and the praise and glory of God. "There came a fear on all, and they glorified God." Their thought was of Him, and the miracle before them raised their minds to Him. And how is it with us? Are we true members of the Church in this; do we seek to fulfil her great charge, the glory of our God? or are we so selfishly engaged with our own needs, that we cannot look beyond what He *gives* us, in



order to glorify and praise the Giver. Moreover, we must not forget that the spirit of praise brings with it its own reward, bedewing the thankful soul with blessing, even with blessing which may be *felt*.

The Psalmist says, as we have lately before quoted, "O praise the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God ; yea, a joyful and *pleasant* thing it is to be thankful." Praise begets a still more gladsome heart, a still greater thankfulness, an ever-increasing trust. Praise unites us with the whole Church of God, for, as we chant in the *Te Deum*, "The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee." And Praise, also, especially unites us with the Church above, and with the holy angels round about the throne.

Let us, then, seek more and more earnestly for this spirit, not only in return for what God



gives us, but for what God is ; and let us seek more to catch the full song of the whole Church throughout the world and throughout all ages,—
“We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee
for Thy great glory.



Seventeenth Week after Trinity.



THE CLOUDY PILLAR.

“One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”—*Ephes. iv. 6.*

YOU may perhaps be surprised in our Reading for to-day, to find it headed by this title,—“The Cloudy Pillar.” But I think, as we go on, you will see the reason of it. For when was it that the Presence of God first went before to lead His people, and then behind to guard them from their enemies? Was it not when He brought Israel out of Egypt, and as they journeyed towards the promised land. And now we too are on our journey. We have

renounced the world, our Egypt, and God has brought us out, and set us on the way to the land of Eternal Promise. But the road is full of dangers ; before are unknown perils, behind the sins and dangers which we have left are ever ready as enemies to come upon us and affright and harass us, if nothing worse. So then what does the Collect for this week pray ? "Lord, we pray Thee, that Thy grace may always prevent"—that is, go before—"and follow us." How beautiful is this !

Now you will see there are three thoughts brought before us in the Collect for this week. First, the thought of a journey ; second, the need of the Presence of our God, both before to lead us, and behind to guard us ; third, the way in which we should walk on our journey, namely, "continually given to all good works."

Now the God in Whom we trust is the same

God, Who led and guarded His ancient people. For there is "one God and Father of all," as we read in our text, "Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." And what do these words signify, when taken with reference to what He did for His Church of old, and what He will now do for us? Just this, that He is All-sufficient for every need, and that without Him we are sure to go astray, to fall into dangers, to perish by the hand of our enemies. As He was All-sufficient for the Israelites, so He will be to us, if we follow and obey His Voice and leading. He exactly accommodates Himself to the needs of His people. Was it not so in the days of old before alluded to? His Presence was to His people as a cloud by day, that He might lead them, and that thus they might, even in the noontide splendour of the eastern sun, be enabled to see their Guide, and rest their weary

eyes on the Veiled Presence of God. But at night all this was altered. Then the cloud could not be seen, so He changed the manner of His Presence, and went before them as a flame of fire. So we read in the seventy-eighth Psalm, "In the day time also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire," "One God and Father of all," ever in all ages, "above all and through all," for the comfort, defence, and guidance of His chosen ones.

Now, we have already seen in the Collect, how we are to be employed in our journey; and S. Paul in the Epistle repeats the lesson. He beseeches us that we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. You all know what that vocation is, namely, to renounce all evil, and to believe and do all good, as we have before said. And are we doing this? Are we walking as those should do who have the

great God for their Leader and Defence ? Or are we wandering out of the way, stiff-necked, rebellious, murmuring, or, at best, *unfruitful* ? Where is the lowliness, the long-suffering, the forbearance amongst us, of which S. Paul speaks in the Epistle ? Where is the union of Christians ? What, think you, would have been the fate of the Children of Israel had they strayed from the ranks on their march ? for we read they went up in ranks from the land of Egypt, in order, in one vast army, under the leader appointed for them by God Himself. Had they broken their order, or left their ranks or gone astray out of the line of march, there would have been no *assured* salvation for them. It is possible they might have been able to return, but the probability is, that as the whole company was on the march they would have been left behind.

And how is it with us ? Are we walking in the company of those with whom we have been baptized into the "One Baptism ?" just as the Israelites were, as we read, baptized "in the cloud and in the sea." Are we walking in union with the Church of God,—that vast army of all nations, and kindreds, and people, whom He has brought up out of Egypt ? Are we under the Great Captain of our Salvation, and living in obedience to those whom He has appointed to watch for our souls ? Or are we wandering after self-chosen teachers, in self-chosen paths ? If it be so, let us hasten to re-join the ranks of the true army, lest, passing on, they leave us behind. Remember, "There is" but "one body, and one spirit ; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism." How, then, can we be assured of our salvation excepting we be of that "One Faith ?"

We have spoken of "lowliness" as one of the virtues in the practice of which we should all be living on our journey, and which is one of our greatest safeguards by the way. For if ignorance lead many out of the beaten track of the Church of God, certainly so does the want of lowliness. Is it not often self-conceit, and pride, and self-opinionatedness, which induce men, and determine them, to follow their own will and way? It is this self-sufficiency, also, which makes so many now, as the Pharisees in this week's Gospel, sit in judgment on the Ministers of the Gospel, as they did on our Blessed Lord, if anything is done in a way, or at a time they do not approve, even though it may be, as in the case before us, a work of mercy.

It was against a spirit of pride, also, that our Lord directed the concluding part of this week's Gospel, when He spake the parable of those

who were bidden to a feast. How true to nature is this history! Can you not see, as it were, the table spread? The Master of the feast has, perchance, for a few moments been called aside, and during that time a guest has entered. He looks this way and that, passes by those who are standing about, waiting for the Master to seat them at his pleasure, pushes through all hindrances, and finally seats himself in the very best place, next the Master's seat. But—O great humiliation!—the Master has returned! He is showing all where they are to be seated, and with him is one who, for purposes of his own, he wishes to place in the very seat already occupied. He comes, and finds it taken. The words "Give this man place" are uttered, and the first must now seek a seat amongst the very lowest.

Let us take warning from this history, ever

following our Lord's teaching and example of lowliness and humility, in hope one day to hear those words, spoken by Himself to us : not "Give place," but "*Friend*, go up higher." O ! words of Blessing unspeakable, which shall usher us into the Presence of the Lord, at the Eternal Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

"Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."



Eighteenth Week after Trinity.



SPEECHLESS OR BLAMELESS.

“And no man was able to answer Him a word.”

S. Matt. xxii. 46.

IN the former part of the chapter from which our text is taken, there is another instance recorded of the same nature as that in the text. In the parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, we read that there was a guest came into the Feast without a wedding garment, and then when the King asked the cause “he was speechless,” that is, he had no excuse, nothing to say for himself. With regard, however,

the passage of the text, the reason of the silence of the Pharisees was a somewhat different one. They could not answer Him, because of the depth of His Divine knowledge, into which they were unable to follow Him. As we read, "And no man was able to answer Him a word."

And now let us turn for a moment to the other portion of the title to our Reading for to-day, and then draw from both our week's lesson. In the Collect, the main point on which our petitions turn is Purity, or Blamelessness. And in the Epistle we find S. Paul thanking God for His great and abundant grace, as shown in the Corinthian converts, whom he represents as coming behind in no gift, and as living so as to be "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who," he adds, "shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be *blameless* in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And this thought brings us to the great and awful consideration of *the end*,—of that time when each one of us must stand before our God either *speechless* or *blameless*,—which shall it be? Both conditions are open to all, which will you choose? We must here remember, that these two states must be considered as the ending to that which has gone before; both must be looked upon as the consequences of our previous lives.

How, then, are we living, how do we hope to die, how shall we stand before the Throne of God? Remember that when S. Paul spoke so confidently of the end of his Corinthian converts, he had good reason for his hope of them, and for his confidence concerning them, namely, that as they were now living in expectation of their Lord, so when He did come they might be found of that blessed company, “without fault before the Throne of God.”

Now we know that in the sight of God a soul must be simple, childlike, trusting, and pure in heart, in order to be pleasing in His eyes. And this spirit, in the preaching and reception of the Gospel, is exactly opposed to the reasoning of men, as we read in the chapter further on, from which the Epistle is taken. "Christ sent me . . . to preach the Gospel," saith S. Paul, "not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." So we see in the Gospel that it was impossible that the Pharisees, with their spokesman, the Lawyer, should receive the truth, since they entirely lacked that trustfulness, and simplicity of pur-

pose, that submission of their reason to the Faith, which is essential to the right reception of the things of the Kingdom. "Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." And so it fell out, that when they were put to the test and questioned, and our Lord set before them the deep mystery of the Incarnation, they were unable to understand or to answer Him a word. God manifest in the Flesh, David's Son as well as David's Lord; this Truth, the Messiah in His humiliation, they could not receive,—it was a portion of that preaching of the Cross which was to "the Jews a stumbling-block." And yet it is in the simple reception by Faith of this deep mystery, expanded on all sides, on which our sole Hope depends, on which our grace to withstand temptation and to walk in Purity depends.



It is through Jesus Christ alone, believed in as God and Man, that we can stand at the last without fault before God. As in the Epistle, "Who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless." And in the Epistle of S. Jude, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to prevent you faultless before the Presence of His Glory, with exceeding joy, to the Only Wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." And again, all that we have said is remarkably brought out, in the first chapter of S. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the Body of His Flesh through death to present you holy and unblameable and unrepveable in His Sight : If ye continue in the Faith grounded and

settled." So that we see plainly from all this, that it is on Jesus, on God manifest in the Flesh, and on Him crucified, that we must hang ; first, for salvation ; secondly, for grace to walk holily ; thirdly, for perseverance to the end ; lastly, for our only plea before the Throne. We must have His Grace flowing over us, His Merits clothing us as with a Wedding Garment, and His Grace working in us, in order that we may be acceptable and approved in His Sight. And we must have, further, His Love abiding in us, and overflowing in deeds of Love to others ; for on these two Commandments, as saith the Gospel,—the Love of God, and the Love of our Neighbour,—“hang all the Law and the Prophets.” And as regards all this, and especially this last point of Love, there is a most solemn consideration.

The guest and the Pharisees were alike

speechless, because when the King, when Jesus, questioned them, they had nothing to answer. And there will come a day, when you and I, and all of us, will likewise be questioned and taken to task,—when the books will be opened, and we judged according to those things which are written therein. What will be the record, and what our answer? Our names will be there, and what opposite to them? Over against some there will be a fair and lovely record of long years spent from childhood in the service of the Lord. Against others, there will be sad lists of sins committed, still standing out in all their terrible blackness. Against other names, there *have been* such records, but now a bright red cross is drawn through them as by the stroke of a pen, and they are remembered no more. On these pages many tears have fallen, and in the place of every sin committed in times gone

by, sweet and lovely works of Purity and Truth have sprung up ; for there has been a thorough change of mind, a true repentance, perfect forgiveness, an altered life. And now the end has come, and before God they are being judged. The great point of the awful questioning seems to be, how our love to God and to our neighbour has been shown forth. It will be well if we all turn at our leisure to S. Matthew's Gospel, chapter xxv., ver. 31, &c., and read there the account of *the end*, examining whether we, in such circumstances, have been blameless. If not, how shall we have a word to say *then* ! He that is blameless now will be "without fault" then. He that is living without God now will be "speechless" then. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."



Nineteenth Week after Trinity.



THE THREE STATES.

"A man sick of the palsy."—*S. Matt.* ix. 2.

[F we look carefully into the teaching of the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel to-day, we shall find that there are three distinct states or conditions of soul spoken of, and that these are closely figured in the history of the man sick of the palsy, as recorded in the Gospel.

Notice, then, first, his helplessness, deadness, lack of feeling; second, his recovery; third, the proof of his cure. Then turn to the three spiritual states figured by this sick man, as men-

tioned in the Collect and Epistle. First, our *natural* helplessness to please God, our darkened understanding; second, our recovery through the operation of the Spirit, by Jesus Christ; third, our walking in newness of life, thus giving proof of our healing. In the first state of absolute helplessness, even of death before God, we were all born into the world; and even after we were quickened in Holy Baptism, many of us have fallen back into a state of extreme danger, through sin persevered in and unrepented of.

Let us to-day especially think of this, namely, of sin bringing us into extreme danger and sickness of soul, even after Baptism. For though the condition of such sinners is, to say the least, a very precarious one, yet is God's grace able to overcome such sin, to pardon and cleanse the sinner, and to restore him to newness of life.

First, then, let us consider the state into which a sinner has fallen who is wilfully living in sin after his new birth in Baptism. *Of himself* he cannot return to God ; while his helplessness and senselessness increase with every renewed act of sin. He is not indeed, nor can he be, in the same position as he was previous to his baptism,—then he was an alien, now he is, even in his sad condition, a *child*,—this, however, at present only increases his condemnation. Besides, he is sick of the soul's palsy ; he is unable to move, unable in his own power or strength to come to the Good Physician ; his soul is, as it were, clouded and but half conscious, who shall arouse it ? It is possible that at times, in the midst of all this, he may wish to come to Jesus, and he feels, may be, strange yearnings, —blessed tokens of God's preventing grace within him,—which *would* draw him to God ;

and yet he answers not, for he knows not the Loving Voice which whispers to him ; he turns and slumbers, or lies motionless and dead to good.

And now, perhaps, some may think,—Yes, this is all most true, but it only applies to grievous sinners, those who have sinned exceedingly, openly, notoriously ; it does not surely apply also to what we call small sins, such as peevish tempers, little insincerities, small dishonesties, hidden uncharitableness, and so forth ? To this we must reply, that *any* sin, unrepented of, causes extreme danger to the soul, is a present state of sickness, and must ultimately cause death, except it be sorrowed over, pardoned, and striven against. “ There shall in no wise enter into ” the Heavenly City “ anything that defileth.” “ The soul that sinneth it shall die.” There is no exception in this awful text.

One kind of sin may be, and is, of a more grievous character than another, but all sin willfully retained on the soul, must in the end cause death.

How then can we rise up from this state of lethargy of which we have been speaking? It can only be by the quickening power of the Blessed Spirit, working in us, and leading us to repentance. And here we would again remind all of the power of intercessory prayer, and of the blessing of faithful friends. The poor palsied man *could* not come to Jesus himself, for he was helpless; but his friends brought him, and it was when Jesus saw "*their* faith" that the miracle of mercy was wrought. Have you ever brought one sin-sick soul in prayer to our dear Lord for healing? Have you ever asked for such His renewing Grace? Have you ever prayed for the impure, that they may be made

chaste ; for the intemperate, that they may become sober ; for the disobedient, that they may become dutiful ; for the violent-tempered, that they may be made gentle ? Our Lord is ever bringing us before God ; are we following His example, and praying for others, bringing them to Jesus ?

But we must now return. As we have said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," whether through the prayers of others, or through the unsought Love of God. When the helpless, palsied soul is stirred, it is the work of the Holy Ghost alone. And here we come to the second part of this week's lesson, namely, the recovery or raising of the soul from its state of spiritual sickness. Even when stirred and roused from its slumber, even when conscious of its condition, it cannot rise and walk in newness of life. This is shown in the words of the Collect, "O God,

forasmuch as *without Thee we are not able to please Thee.*"

The sins which the soul becomes aware of cleave to and weigh it down. It needs, then, two words of Divine Love and Power, in order to its renewal,—“Thy sins be forgiven thee,” and “Arise and walk.” Now God has many ways of saying this first word to individual souls; let us not limit the methods of His Mercy. To one the Voice of Forgiveness comes in one way, to another in another. But we must especially look at this Gospel, as an instance of those passages of Holy Scripture which point more particularly to that mode of forgiveness which is wrought through the instrumentality of the Ministers of Jesus Christ, of which we have before spoken, as being taught in our own Church. We see this in a very striking manner, if we look at the Gospel narrative; for after

our Blessed Lord had uttered those words, so full of infinite love and comfort, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," we read that the multitude " marvelled, and glorified God, *Who had given such power unto men.*" Let us willingly embrace and receive every means of grace—(we need all we can obtain,)—which have Holy Scripture and our Church for their authority. In whatever way, then, God comes to the soul in forgiveness, it is certain that the sin-laden cannot rise and walk, until, in some manner, the comfortable assurance and gift of pardon has been granted to them. Forgiveness and Strength are the recovery of the soul, and the recovery of the soul is manifested by a renewed and holy life,—a life which in the Collect is described as that state which is in all things guided, and directed, and ruled, by the Holy Spirit of God.

And now, in which of these states are we,—sleeping and helpless in sin, or forgiven and recovered, walking in holiness? Are we in the first, or in the two last, namely, forgiven and recovered, and walking in holiness? Alas! there is abundance, a fearful abundance, all around us, of grievous sin, and of small sins unrepented of, causing, if persevered in, a lingering sickness of the soul, which must in the end terminate in death. And there are, too, thanks be to God, superabundant mercy and forgiveness, waiting our seeking prayers, our repentance, our acceptance, to be called forth in ever-increasing stores of Love. But where is the humble search, the true change of mind, signified by the term Repentance, the earnest, heartfe't, trusting acceptance of pardon when offered. O! if we repented more earnestly, and sorrowed more humbly, there would be



a brighter assurance than there is in most of us of God's pardon, and thus a more *ardent* and devoted service, as writes the Psalmist,—“I will *run* the way of Thy Commandments when Thou hast set my heart at liberty.” Amen



Twentieth Week after Trinity.



CHEERFULNESS.

“Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is.”—*Ephesians* v. 17.

WE are perhaps too much inclined to think that God is so high above us all, and so Great, and so far from us, that He does not notice, what we call little things.

We imagine that if we serve Him for the most part well, and if, above all, we are saved at the last, it is not so much matter *how* we serve Him, or in what manner we reach our desired home. Nothing can be a greater mistake. Just think for a moment. Do *you* not

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expression of something which is deep and inward. What then is that *something*? It is the abiding purpose of the soul to do and suffer the whole Will of God. And as the "fresh springs" of Grace are ever flowing in to replenish and renew this holy resolution and purpose, which lies as a clear and deep well within the faithful soul. A sweet cadence, as of music, rises with glad sound from its pure depths; that music, described in the Epistle with such intense beauty, as the *melody of our hearts*. But yet more,—it is "*to the Lord*." It is the answering "Voice of praise and thanksgiving" for mercies received, even the singing and making melody" in our hearts "*to the Lord*."

And lastly,—it is this temper of mind, hidden deep down where none but God can see,—this spirit of obedience and praise; which comes to

the surface of our lives, in what we call Cheerfulness. When the sun shines brightly on a clear flowing river, its waters seem to smile as they sparkle and glisten in the light; and when the Sun of Righteousness shines on the waters of grace, which flow through and fertilize the hearts of men, there is then the answering smile also, and the quiet loveliness of Christian Cheerfulness. There is the determination to do and suffer the Will of God, and that *gladly*.

It is this spirit our Heavenly Father so much loves. "God loveth a *cheerful* giver." "Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord." We are to be of a *willing* mind, to show "mercy with *cheerfulness*." Cheerful obedience, then, is the great lesson of this week. Not only obedience, but *willing* obedience (if we do these things willingly, we have a reward), *delight* in doing the Will of our God,

after the Pattern of Jesus, Whose Words were,
"Lo, I come . . . I *delight* to do Thy Will, O
my God; yea, Thy Law is within my *Heart*."

Without this inward grace, we shall never
find the outward form of it, never meet with
that sweet temper, that kindly sympathy, that
putting aside of annoyances, that love, which
speaks so surely of a soul at rest within; that
Cheerfulness which makes us know that deep
down in the soul, there is a sweet making of
melody in the heart "*to the Lord*."

But we before said there was in the Gospel
an example of a contrary frame of mind. It
is indeed a very striking instance, and one in
which cheerful obedience, as it appears, was so
very easy as to leave no excuse. It is also a
very pointed instance of what we have before
noticed to-day, namely of obedience, but of
unloving obedience, in a sense the of fulfilling



the letter, but not of the spirit. Like the case of a child who obeys, but does so in the most unpleasing manner possible, with as little regard as may be to his parents wishes. Let us look closely into the narrative, especially that part of it which forms the latter part of the Gospel. A King makes a marriage feast for his son. The first set of guests were all indifferent and disobedient to the invitation of the King, and added to this, shameful ill usage of His servants who had been charged with the King's invitation. This conduct did not however go unpunished, for "when the King heard thereof He was wroth, and He sent forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." And now comes that part of the history, with which to-day we have especially to do. The King's servants at His Word go forth and invite another band of guests, all that



they can find, both bad and good," and we read "the wedding was furnished with guests." But before going any further let us notice that it was a custom in the East at royal feasts, such as we are describing, to provide the guests with a garment suitable to the occasion, and that the not putting it on, was considered an insult to the Lord of the Feast. Think how much all these guests would need the raiment provided, for they were bidden from the very highways. And they *all* came; all were, so far, obedient to the call, to the message, sent by the servants of the King. Now let us notice in one case what *sort* of obedience this was. There was one man came in to the banquet—he had no objection to obey the call, no reluctance to share the good things provided. But he would come, he thought, in his own way. He would do very well without the robe offered to him;

he did not particularly care *how* he got in to the feast so long as he was there, he wished to be independent, and after all it could not make much difference. The King indeed had bidden him, and had also said how he wished all to be clothed for the occasion, and he had come, therefore surely he need not mind such a little thing as whether or not he had on a particular dress. Ah! he did not know his Lord; he did not know, or he did not believe, that He would really take notice whether or not He was obeyed cheerfully, and *according to His Will*.

He came in to see the guests, and at once noticed that there was one who had dared to sit down at His Table utterly regardless of His wishes. He had *come*, it is true, but not according to the Will of His Lord. And what was His punishment? First, being questioned, he was speechless; and then sound forth those

awful words, " Bind him hand and foot, and take him away." " O Almighty and most merciful God, keep us we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us ; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldst have done ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Twenty-First Week after Trinity.



A QUIET MIND.

“The Gospel of Peace.”—*Ephes.* vi. 15.

THE first thought, on looking over this week's teaching, seems to be a prevailing feeling of rest, of the quiet of an Autumn day, when the fruit has ripened, and the leaves are beginning to fall, when “Peace Divine” seems everywhere mingled with the “calm decay” of nature. It reminds us of the closing days of a well-spent life, and of the thought that this season is bringing us quickly, so quickly, to the end of the Church's year!

I say this is the *first* thought. On looking

further, however, though the lesson of quietness, and confidence, and peace seems to cling to us, yet we are taken into deeper teaching, and from the Epistle gather how there is a peace, far more wonderful than that attained to, when all around is calm, even that Peace which may be enjoyed, in spite of the warfare by which we are surrounded, in spite of all troubles and perplexities.

The Collect seems to recapitulate much that has been before said, namely, that we must have Pardon of God before we can have Peace, and that we must have Peace before we can hope to make much way in the path of Holiness; and then comes the quiet mind; for the work of Righteousness is Peace, and the "effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Further, just so far as our minds are set at rest, so far shall we progress in our spiritual warfare,

for remember the words of Holy Scripture,—
“In quietness and in confidence shall be your *strength*.” How much need have we to pray the prayer of this week’s Collect, so beautiful, so simple, so full !

A quiet mind ! what a gift that is ! Sweet, indeed, it is to have outward peace, and all things quiet around us ; but this is of little avail except there be also rest within,—while, if the Peace of God is in our hearts, we may be in the midst of tumult, yet at rest.

Quietness of mind ! The body may be racked with pain, or it may be imprisoned, or tried in a thousand ways, but yet that other marvellous portion of our being, amid all the suffering and the tumult and the trial,—*our mind*,—may be in perfect peace and repose. “In quietness and in confidence shall be your *strength*.”

Now look at the Epistle, and you will see

there how wonderfully this is brought out. First, look at the picture which is presented to our mind's eye. There is a vast plain before us, and on that plain there are two great armies gathering for the fight. The sun shines brightly on the flashing armour of the one host, whilst murky clouds hover over the opposite forces. On one side are ranged the soldiers of Jesus, all, that is, who have been signed with His Cross and baptized into His Name ; on the other are the followers of Satan, all, that is, who have not declared themselves for the Lord,—there is no middle course. Many in Satan's army are exceedingly powerful ; in the Epistle they are described as "principalities," as "powers," as "rulers" of darkness. Added to these are the "wiles of the devil," and "spiritual wickedness in high places." Many, also, in the army of *Jesus* are powerful likewise, but not all so ; they



might be, but they are not so, for they have many of them neglected to use the armour given them for the fight, and the training necessary to make them good soldiers. But some are very powerful, and amongst these are even women and little children. One soldier, however, seems especially brought before us as our pattern. The enemy are gradually approaching him, but he does not move; his eyes are fixed on the Everlasting Hills, while at the same time not a movement of the enemy escapes him; he is, however, prepared,—so well prepared, that he *stands* quietly awaiting their approach. He is calm, collected, and hopeful, nay, even assured of victory. His loins are girt about with Truth; his breastplate is jewelled with precious stones, for it is the breastplate of Righteousness; his feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, ready to move only at the bidding of

the Will of God. Above all, he has taken the Shield of Faith, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. His head is surmounted by the Helmet of Salvation, and as he stands, his lips move continually in earnest prayer, not only for himself, but for all on his side the plain, namely, for "all saints," and especially for him who has taught him the ways of God. He is in perfect peace, and, in the midst of the battle field, is in quiet and in confidence.

And here this word confidence strikes at the very root of the whole matter. What do we ask in the Collect? We pray that God may grant these good things, of which we have spoken, to His people. They are, then, to be received only, to be obtained only, from Him. What is S. Paul's exhortation in the Epistle? "My brethren, be strong *in the Lord*, and in

the power of *His might.*' What armour, then, was it in which the Christian soldier was arrayed whom we have been describing? "The whole armour *of God.*" What, then, was his quietness of mind, his trust, his assurance of victory based on? Not on himself, for we find him standing in armour not his own, and without which he would have been utterly defenceless; and we find him praying earnestly for himself and for others, thus plainly showing that it was on *another* he was leaning, to *another* he looked for aid and succour, that, being armed, he might have grace to use his weapons rightly, and to persevere even to the end. His confidence was not self-confidence, but entire trust in his Lord. This was the cause of his peace, and Jesus was Himself the Strength of his heart and his Portion for ever.

If, then, we would be pardoned, cleansed, at

peace, walking in holiness in the midst of all the disquiet and tumult of this world, now so defiled by sin, we must come to, trust in, learn of Jesus, ever increasingly, all our lives long. He must be the Rest of our minds, the Quietness of our souls, the Abiding Joy of our hearts ; His Will the firm purpose of our lives ; prayer and intercession our constant source of strength, the channel of all grace for ourselves and others. It was so with the nobleman in the Gospel. He came in his need to Jesus ; he prayed earnestly, repeatedly, trustingly, and that for another. What must have been his joy, and his confirmed confidence in his Lord, when he found that the hour of his child's amendment exactly corresponded with the time in which Jesus uttered the words "Thy son liveth !" He knew then, indeed, that his Lord was worthy of his confidence, "and himself believed and his whole

house.” “My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”



Twenty-second Week after Trinity.



PERSEVERANCE.

“From the first day until now.”—*Phil.* i. 5.

TO-DAY we pray first in the Collect, for the Church as the “Household” of the Lord, and in the Gospel we read some particulars of how that Household is governed. We read of the exceeding Love of God, and of His Justice also; and we see, too, how; and this is a most awful thought,—it is quite possible after having obtained the forgiveness of God, to lose it through sin,—through want of loving perseverance in well-doing, even to the end..

Now turn again to the Collect and see what

it is we there ask first for the Church of God, —it is the gift of *perseverance*,—"Keep Thy Household the Church, in *continual* godliness." Then look to the Epistle, and you will find St. Paul writing to the Philippians, on the same subject, and thanking God, that they had been so stedfast in the Faith "from the first day until now"—indeed, so greatly was he reassured by the grace of God, as shown in them, that he was confident, not only of their present well-doing, but that He Who had begun the good work in them would perform it "until the Day of Jesus Christ." Then he falleth to prayer for them all, that their love may abound more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment, "that ye may approve," he writes, "things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere, and without offence *till the Day of Christ*, being filled with the fruits of Righteousness, which

are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

The Collect and Epistle for this week, hang, as it were, very closely together, in the thoughts which pass through them. Let us turn back for a short time to the Collect. There the following seem to be the thoughts presented to us. We first pray, as we have said, for the perseverance of the Church in godliness, and then, as a natural consequence, we trust and pray that this perseverance in a state of grace, and freedom from adversity, may lead to a life of active holiness : and that the Church of God, even the whole Household of Faith, may be devoutly given to serve Him in all good works. And this is not all. There is to be a motive for all this beyond the Salvation of the Church. These good works are not only to be pursued for the sake of advancement in holiness, and in

order to the obtaining of reward, and a high place in Heaven, but with reference to God ; as the Collect expresses it, "To the glory of Thy Name." We are then further reminded of Him by Whom alone all these good things reach us, in the words, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the Epistle you will see this teaching repeated, or referred to. First, perseverance in good works. Then the afflictions of that time are spoken of, the "bonds" of the Apostle ; and from like sorrows, we pray in the Collect, if it please God, we may be delivered. Then the serving Him devoutly in good works is mentioned—"being filled with the fruits of righteousness," and that, too, "unto the glory and praise of God," "by Jesus Christ." Now let us turn to the Gospel. Here we have a glimpse, as it were, of God's government of the Church, or as we have seen it to-day called,

His Household. We see what should be its prevailing temper, namely, forgiving love. We see, too, that wanting this to one another, we forfeit the forgiveness which may once have been ours. We see, likewise, how above all God reigns absolute and supreme, and how, though we may have been placed in a state of grace, yet unless we persevere therein, it will avail us nothing, but the rather increase our condemnation. There is a great deal in the first part of the Gospel narrative on which we might meditate, but we will confine ourselves to that part of the history which relates the incidents which occurred after the entire and full forgiveness of the servant who was so deeply indebted to his Lord. He had humbled himself, and had found mercy, how then will he from henceforth walk, how will he seek to shed abroad upon others the same love, accord-

ing to his power, with which he has been made free? Would not our natural hearts teach us that it is a base thing to deal with our neighbour in a harder and less loving manner than we ourselves have been dealt with? One would have thought so, but let us look to the narrative. What was the servant's conduct when he left the presence of his master a free man? Was his heart melted into gratitude and love, first to his lord, for his great mercy towards him, and secondly to all in trouble, because he himself had been likewise afflicted? O, no! his lord's favour did not thus beget in him a spirit of praise and love, but rather one of hardness. Alas! unknown to himself, he was falling back from his state of forgiveness, for he was casting aside that spirit of love which, though may be he saw it not, was the very condition of his pardon. As one has said,

“he *might* have gone on, to an ever fuller recognition of the grace shown him; but as it was, in a little while he lost sight of it altogether.” He “*went out*” from his Lord, as the same writer implies, not only in person, but in heart; not only in bodily presence, but in spirit. As he went out, we read, he finds a fellow-servant, who owed him a sum, not worthy to be named in comparison with that debt which his master had forgiven him. He finds him, however, and seizes him with personal violence, saying, “Pay me that thou owest.” Then follows an almost exactly similar scene to that which took place in the case of the Lord and the first-named servant. Perhaps this was, as it were, the last touch of grace, in order to soften his heart, for his poor fellow-servant uses the exact words, which *he* had used in *his* trouble to his lord; this, however seems the

rather to have further hardened him, for he would not listen to him, but cast him into prison. And now comes the avenging hand of the King, who heard of all that had happened. Perhaps the servant thought he had now all his own way, and that no one would interfere. He had forgotten or been ignorant of his Lord's absolute power, and that he only held the forgiveness of his own offences on condition that he showed a like mercy to others. All is now changed. His lord calls him, and thus addresses his hitherto forgiven servant, "O, thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me : shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant? even as I had pity on thee?" And now we read of no hope, no answer, no appeal, no prayer; all such opportunity is past, and the wrath of the lord is poured forth upon his un-

forgiving, unloving, servant. He falls, his forgiveness is withdrawn, and he is delivered into the hands of the tormenters, nor only burdened with the weight of his enormous debt, but with the additional load of his lord's fresh anger. "So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

And now from all this let us take away at least this special threefold lesson. We can scarcely repeat it too often. First, that it is not sufficient to *have been* forgiven persons, unless we keep that priceless gift *to the end*, and guard it by constant perseverance in well-doing. Secondly, that since "God Is Love," He must have His children also, like Him, loving; and that whatever be our apparent godliness, unless we have within us the spirit

of love, we are in His Sight as nothing. And, lastly, that if we be unforgiving, we can have no good hope of God's forgiveness.



Twenty-Third Week after Trinity.



THE PERFECTING OF PRAYER.

“He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

Phil. iii. 21.

HOW ever well we put a question, we scarcely count it as perfected except we receive an answer. And if we make a petition, it is in our sight of little value, unless it prove the means of obtaining that which we desire. Thus, in the Collect, we ask of God “that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain *effectually*,” that is, in such a manner as shall produce in us those graces for which we have prayed, or, as shall make us possessed of those things for which

we have asked ; so that our petitions may not only be prayers, but prayers *answered* and perfected.

Now we are all very liable to fall far short of this view of prayer. We pray with too little earnestness, and expectation of the answer. Or, may be, we, as it were, scarcely believe that God *can* grant the things we ask. Of us, for the most part, may it not truly be said, " O faithless . . . generation ! " or, again, " Where is your faith ? " Even when God *does* grant our petitions, we express our surprise and wonder, we are astonished that God should really grant our requests !

But to return to the thought that it is so hard in some cases to believe that God can really answer our prayers. For this, let us take refuge in the comforting truth of His entire and absolute power ; nay, more, the Collect

shows us that He Himself is our "Refuge and Strength," and the text speaks of Him as He Who "is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Let us not fear,—“Is anything *too hard* for the Lord?” We cannot ask Him anything which is too difficult for Him to grant us. Let us take heed, however, that our prayers are “devout,” and that we ask them “faithfully.” “Devout,” that is, reverent, submissive; “faithfully,” that is, believing in the Power and Love of God, and that He can and will do what we ask, if He sees it good for us. When we approach Him, there should be in us, not only a felt need, but a sense of our nothingness in comparison with Him,—a sense of His glory, as well as of His character as “*our Father*,” and of the truth that “God is Love.”

Now if you look at the Gospel you will see that it was just in all these particulars that the



Pharisees were at fault. They were utterly wanting in a spirit of reverence and humility when they approached our Blessed Lord. They did not come to Him in a child-like spirit to be instructed, but, we read, they "took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk." They came to Him with subtlety, with flattery, with hypocrisy: "Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man, for Thou regardest not the person of men." Then they ask Him a question; but, we are told, "Jesus perceived their wickedness," for He could search the very innermost recesses of their hearts, and at once He unveiled their hypocrisy,—“Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites?”

Think of these words from Jesus, so gentle, so loving, so enduring; and let us learn here how He hates all double-dealing, all want of

simplicity, lest we come under a like condemnation. For, if we approach God in anything like this spirit of the Pharisees, let us not think we "shall receive anything of the Lord" to our soul's health, or towards the effectual answer to our prayers ; rather, we may look for their confusion and discomforture. They came in hypocrisy, and He, by His great wisdom, put them to confusion, and revealed their double mind, and all that was left to them was to marvel, to leave Him, to go their way.

And how is it with us ? In our communion with God, of what sort are our prayers ? Are they earnest, simple, child-like, *true*, from the heart, reverent, faithful, devout ? Moreover, are they strong in trust, full of expectation and watchfulness for the answer, if such be God's Will ? Further, too, are our lives answerable to our petitions, are we striving "each and every



day" to make them agreeable to our prayers? S. Paul bids us follow him, as we read in the Epistle, and to mark them who do so. See, then, what his example was, what his expectation, what his confidence. "Our conversation," says he, "is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." We almost lose ourselves in this wonderful description of holiness, of waiting, and watching for the Lord, of trust in His Power, of the sight of His risen and ascended Glory. Yet, nevertheless, the Apostle's words ring in our ears, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. . . . For our conversation is in Heaven." *We*, then,

are to aspire to all this ! And can we wonder at S. Paul's trust and confidence, when we read of his life ? Look, again, at the Epistle, and see how he weeps over sin, how he mourns over those who love not but oppose the Cross of Christ, "whose end," he says, "is destruction." And then, remember, if we would have his fervent trust, whether in prayer or otherwise, we must strive to follow him in his humility, in his jealousy for the cause of Christ, in his waiting for the coming of the Lord. So will our prayers be "devout" and "faithful ;" so also, assuredly, will their answer be *effectual*. For "this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His Will, He heareth us." Thus will our prayers be perfected.

And now, one word in conclusion, lest any should think, after what we have said,—“I

need not pray ; it is of no use in me to ask anything of God." To such we would say, *not so ; all* must pray, those who are seeking, and those who have found the Christ, *All* must pray, as they value their salvation, their sanctification, their perseverance in well-doing. But we who are, as yet, may be, only seekers, though we *must* persevere, though we have every encouragement to do so, and though we are certain of satisfaction for our longings if we persevere, yet must we not expect all at once the quiet trust of those who have *found*, and who have long served the Lord ; and if we would be assured of God's favour, we must seek it in "The assurance of a pure heart."



Twenty-fourth Week after Trinity.



RENEWED CLEANSING.

“If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.”

S. Matthew ix. 21.

THERE is something very striking in the teaching for this week,—coming, as it does, so near the end of the Church’s year.

What does it show to us? Plainly I think this lesson,—that however old we may be, or however far advanced in knowledge, and holiness, we stand before God, even to the last, only and entirely through the Precious Blood of Jesus, and need, to the latest day of our lives, the application of His Merits to our

souls, in constantly renewed supplies of pardon and healing. Notice first,—As if the Church had never before spoken to us of God's forgiveness, she makes it this week her special prayer, "O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences." She has well nigh gone through the full twelve months of her teaching, yet she still feels so constantly the need of fresh cleansing, that she utters again, as it were, the cry of her earlier days, "Absolve, O Lord, Thy people." She longs for a renewed touch of Faith, she is brought once more to feel her need, she must leave for the moment all thought even of advance in holiness, in order again to realize her true position, and to lay once more the very foundations of her spiritual existence. And do you not think the Gospel narrative of to-day very wonderfully falls in with this idea? We

will leave for the present the history of the ruler's daughter, to examine that of the poor woman also spoken of. Her great desire was to get within reach of the Lord. And such was her faith, that she felt assured that if she could but touch His garment she should be whole. We see in the narrative that nothing deters her from making the attempt. Her weakness of body does not keep her back ; the crowd which presses and throngs our Blessed Lord she heeds not. She does not give way to any false shame, her purpose is a *true* and a simple one, and her faith overcomes all difficulties. She somehow contrives to get near Him, and reaching forth her hand, unseen by all around, she touches the Sacred Robe of her Lord. Then, O wonderful reward ! "She felt in her body that she was healed of that plague."

Now, we will suppose that during these long months of teaching, we have been learning more and more of ourselves,—that we have come to the knowledge of our first forgiveness in Holy Baptism, and also, alas! that most of us have forfeited our Baptismal standing ground by subsequent sin, that is, by sin committed after Baptism.

We know, then, that we must have renewed forgiveness. We feel that unless we obtain it there is no hope for us. We must have it, and we can only obtain it from the Lord Himself, or through others, as the channels of His Pardoning Love.

Any way, it is *His Virtue* which must be applied to us. And in our teaching of to-day, the Church points to this by her cry to the Lord, as in the Collect, and the poor woman in the Gospel points to this, as she presses

through all difficulties that she may approach her Lord, saying within herself,—“If I may but touch His Garment I shall be whole.” And have we done, are we doing, anything like this? All over the whole world, multitudes are thronging and pressing upon our Blessed Lord for healing,—some falling before Him, some in deep sense of their own uncleanness, finding Him by the silent touch of Faith, and *all* who come receiving a full and perfect answer to their prayers. But amongst these are *we* found?

For the most part we are all more or less conscious of the fell disease of sin, which though it may be slowly, is surely wasting our life away, except we be ever living in a state of repentance and grace. But though we are conscious of it, what are we doing to get rid of this sickness of the soul; what means are we



taking for our cure? Many of us feel that all is not right within us, many of us know that there is sin on our souls. But yet are we like the poor woman whose history we are considering? The Master, indeed passes by on some ministration of love, as in the Gospel, through the ordering of the circumstances which surround us, through the instrumentality of His servants, through every appointed means of grace; but do we not allow Him too frequently to pass unheeded? do we not too often sit at ease in our homes and in our cottages, when we should be on our knees before Him, in our chambers, or in His holy House of Prayer, crying "Unclean, unclean!" "God be merciful to me a sinner," "Jesus, Master, have mercy?" O, let it not be so any longer with us! Let this day's teaching sink deep into our hearts.

One week more and we shall be called again

to listen to the stern voice of the Baptist exhorting us to repentance, because "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." O, let us seek *now* so to find the Lord and to obtain His Pardon, that when Advent comes, we may not fear, but "love His Appearing." Now He is The Good Physician, The Good Shepherd, *Jesus*—The Saviour. But one day He will be the Avenger, the Judge,—and then "Who may abide the Day of His coming and who shall stand when He appeareth." For those, however, who *have* made their peace with God, there is a beautiful lesson to-day. Such will, indeed, often feel a special need of God's renewed forgiveness. A daily coming to Him for pardon, a constant trust in His mercy, will not prevent them at solemn seasons of the Church's year, such as Advent and Lent, from diligently searching into the state of their souls,

and from coming to God again and again for renewed and special cleansing.

But there is something more than this to be thought of, or rather, more than at first sight appears. For it is not only *pardon* that we should seek; rather, being pardoned, our lives should be as one continued thanksgiving, one act of praise, of grateful and adoring love; of love, shown forth, as we read in the Epistle to the Colossians, "to all the Saints;" so that S. Paul's heart was constrained to praise God saying, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the Hope which is laid up for you in Heaven." So must we strive to "walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work' . . . *giving thanks* unto the

Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light." Amen.



Twenty-Fifth Week after Trinity.



THE REWARD OF WELL-DOING.

“They shall dwell in their own land.”—*Jer.* xxiii. 8.

THIS will be our last Reading together before Advent. The lesson for the week is, as we so often find it, distinctly *twofold*,—alike one to *rouse*, and also one to comfort and strengthen us, with the prospect of the promised Reward. How much ought we to learn from this week's teaching!—the last words, as it were, of the Church,—the perfecting of her chief lessons to her children. Does she not say to each one of us, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost?” “The time is short.” Hast

thou wasted thine opportunities ? now, at least, put thy shoulder to the wheel. Hast thou grown cold, and dead, and slothful in the service of thy Lord ? hear the voice this day crying aloud to God, and make it thine own,—“Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people.” Resolve in His Strength to be henceforth His, Whose Name to-day is revealed to us as “The Lord our Righteousness.” This is something of the message of arousing. There is also one of comfort and strength for those who are fighting manfully ; a message of rest for the weary, for the exile, for those who long sore for the “Dear, dear Country ;” for the faithful servants, for the obedient children, for the plenteous in good works. For each and all of these there is an abundant reward, and full satisfaction, near the “still waters” of Paradise, in the “green pastures” of the blessed

ones, for "they shall dwell in their *own land*," members of Christ, children of God, *heirs* of the Kingdom. This week's teaching reminds us of the sweet rest afforded to the pilgrims on the delectable mountains in the company of the shepherds, when they beheld the Land of Heavenly Promise through the glass of faith ; or of their sojourn in the Land of Beulah, when, drawing still nearer to the Heavenly City, their soul longed for its celestial glories, as the Vision of its blessedness became more and more distinct to the eye of faith.

But to return. We have spoken of *reward*, and very probably some may say, "You speak of reward, but how can we be rewarded ? does not Holy Scripture expressly declare that, after all, we have only done that which it was our duty to do ?" Yet, even in this view, we can understand the subject of Reward. For if

a servant *does his duty*, do we not love to reward his faithful service? This reward is quite a distinct thing from wages,—something over and above, the free gift of the Master's love and bounty. Moreover, quite distinct and beyond all this, it has pleased God to *promise* rewards to His faithful servants, and His obedient children, out of His Own great mercy. Rewards are as much a portion of the Gospel message as any other part of it; but they are not wages earned of right,—they are gifts of Love, freely bestowed, and by promise. Nevertheless, they are only ours under certain conditions. Just as it is with children,—you reward their obedience, their progress, their patient struggle with some fault; the very term *reward* supposes something which has been previously done. So in the Collect to-day, we pray that our wills may be afresh stirred, and we pray this

prayer in order that "we may plenteously bring forth the fruit of good works, and may, of God, be plenteously *rewarded*." Let us press forward in the school of Jesus; God does not give us less encouragement than do those in this life who endeavour to rouse the minds of their children by the hope of future recompense. Nay, even our Blessed Lord Himself, "*for the Joy that was set before Him*", endured the Cross, despising the shame." Of His servant Moses we read, that he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: *for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*." Again, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him."

And now let us turn for a few moments to another point we must notice. You will recognise the Gospel for to-day in an especial

manner, for we have already meditated together on this passage, since the same Gospel occurs, with the difference only of a few verses, for the fourth week in Lent. There must be something, then, very peculiar in its teaching, some especial reason why it should be twice selected for our meditation. The reason is supposed to be this : You will see, if you look at the portion selected for the Epistle to-day, that in it our Blessed Lord's Coming is foretold ; and in the end of the account of the miracle narrated in the Gospel, we find the people acknowledging Jesus as "that Prophet that should come into the world ;" thus we have the Prophecy and the fulfilment alike set before us this day.

And now let us take one more look at the Epistle, in conclusion. Next Sunday the words will once more ring in our ears, "Behold, Thy King cometh unto thee." Thus, as the Church's

year begins with the thought of Him, so now it closes with a special revelation of Jesus to us. What is that revelation? One which we cannot remember and meditate upon too often. It is this,—that Jesus is not only our Saviour from *punishment*, but that He is also our Saviour from the power of sin, even “the Lord our *Righteousness*.” Thus we read to-day not only of the redemption of His people, but also of His guiding, and leading, and gathering them together, out of all the afflictions into which He had suffered them to fall, and this that He might at length, having chastened and taught them in His Own most holy ways, make His promise good unto them,—“They shall dwell in their own land.”

O sweet and blessed Country,
The Home of God's Elect !
O sweet and blessed Country,
That eager hearts expect !

Jesu, in mercy bring us
To that dear Land of Rest,
Who art, with God the Father,
And Spirit, ever blest. Amen..



PLAIN
CHURCH TEACHING

FOR
The Festivals;
OR,
READINGS FROM THE
COLLECT, EPISTLE, & GOSPEL
OF THE SAINTS' DAYS,
SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR COTTAGE READING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"BRIEF DEVOTIONS FOR PASSION-TIDE."

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CONTENTS.

(VOL. III.)

	PAGE
S. ANDREW'S DAY (Nov. 30).—Ready Obedience ...	5
S. THOMAS THE APOSTLE (Dec. 21).—The lost Blessing	18
S. STEPHEN'S DAY (Dec. 26).—Looking upwards in Trouble	30
S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S DAY (Dec. 27).—Tarrying the Lord's Leisure	45
HOLY INNOCENTS' DAY (Dec. 28).—Suffering through the fault of Others	58
THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL (Jan. 25).—The Changed Will	70
THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE, com- monly called The Purification of S. Mary the Virgin (Feb. 2).—The Parents' Offering	82
S. MATTHIAS' DAY (Feb. 24).—The Lost Place ...	96
THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (March 25).—The Ministry of Gabriel	111
S. MARK'S DAY (April 25).—Stedfastness	124

	PAGE
SS. PHILIP AND JAMES'S DAY (May 1).—Faith, Twofold	137
S. BARNABAS THE APOSTLE (June 11).—Gifts	151
S. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY (June 24).—The Forerunner and Friend	164
S. PETER'S DAY (June 29).—The Food of the Word	177
S. JAMES THE APOSTLE (July 25).—Forsaking All ...	188
S. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE (Aug. 24).—The Love of the Word	201
S. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE (Sept. 21).—The Love of Money	213
S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS (Sept. 29).—The Services of Angels	225
S. LUKE THE EVANGELIST (Oct. 18).—The Healing of the Soul	237
SS. SIMON AND JUDE, APOSTLES (Oct. 28).—Unity ...	248
ALL SAINTS' DAY (Nov. 1).—The Way of Holiness and its Reward	261



THE AUTHOR ventures to make a suggestion, by way of Preface to this Series on the Saints' Days, which was omitted in the former Readings, namely, that it would be advisable to study the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel of the day, before reading each Chapter on the Festivals ; indeed, the series can only be rightly understood by so doing.

S. Andrew's Day, 1869.



S. Andrew's Day,

(NOVEMBER 30.)



READY OBEDIENCE.

“And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him.”

S. Matt. iv. 20.

ON reading over the Collect for S. Andrew's Day, we are at once struck by its special teaching on the subject of *Ready* Obedience.

The Epistle appears to warn us of the danger of disobedience, lest we fall into the condemnation of those spoken of in the concluding words, “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people;” while the Gospel gives us an actual example of

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the obedience after which we should seek, in the case of S. Andrew, who, at the call of Jesus, "*straightway*" left his occupation, and followed Him.

It would seem that there are three things we may especially notice with profit on this Festival. *First*, the station in life of S. Andrew when our Lord called him. *Second*, his ready obedience to the call ; and *third*, his close following in the footsteps of Jesus. We will, then, after considering these three points, endeavour to sum up the practical conclusions for ourselves. By way of introduction, however, to this, let me observe, that though the Church keeps these days of the Saints holy,—as, indeed, we ought all to do,—yet I daresay many a one may be tempted to think, or say, "Ah, yes ; well it is all right for people who have nothing particular to do to keep these Holy Days, and those may

get to be Saints who have time to think about their souls, but as for such as we are, why we must work for our bread, and leave Church-going to richer folk ; and as for the matter of becoming Saints ourselves, that cannot anyhow be for the like of us." But what was S. Andrew, and did he think like this ?

And here we come to our first point, namely, what was the Apostle's station in life when our Lord called him ? S. Andrew was a fisherman, and in the exercise of his trade on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus spoke to him, as to-day recorded. His father, also, is supposed to have been a fisherman before him, and to have been very poor. Yet, in spite of all this, S. Andrew was called to be one of the first of the great Saints of God. He is alike remarkable as being one of the first of the disciples who came to Christ, and the first to bring another to Him ;



as we read in S. John's Gospel, chap. i. verses 35 to 42, when he brought his brother to Jesus. He followed then, the toilsome, laborious trade of a fisherman ; and yet he made it no hindrance to his being one of Christ's disciples, neither did he allow it to keep him back from still closer following of the Lord, when the time for a more personal surrender of himself had arrived. He did not say, "How can a poor fisherman be a follower of Jesus ? how can such an one ever be holy ?" Not so, for he loved Jesus more than his boat and his nets, and so when the Lord called him, he was ready to leave them, and, as the event proved, prepared to brave everything, even death itself, in the service of his Lord, and in order to draw others unto Christ. What a lesson is all this, more especially for those who have to work hard in order to gain their bread ! It would seem that if these

Holy Days are loved by any, they should be loved in a particular manner by those who, may be, toil night and day to get their living ; for on these Festivals how often are we reminded that God hath “ chosen the poor of this world ” to be His Saints, if they be likewise “ rich in faith ! ”

And now we come to our second point,—the Ready Obedience of S. Andrew to the call of Jesus. Our Blessed Lord’s words to him were, “ Follow Me ; ” and S. Andrew *straightway* left his net and followed Him. Notice the expressions used in this day’s service to signify this ready obedience. In the Collect, we read of the “ holy Apostle S. Andrew,” who *readily* obeyed the calling of Jesus Christ, “ and followed Him *without delay*.” We then ask that we too, being called by the Word, may “ *forthwith* give up ourselves ” obediently to fulfil God’s Commandments. Then comes our text



from the Gospel, telling us how S. Andrew "*straightway*" obeyed the Voice of the Lord. There was no lingering, no looking back, but *from henceforth* a life-long service.

And here we seem to be brought to our *third* subject, namely, the close following of S. Andrew in the footsteps of his Divine Master. Let us especially dwell here on *two* points. One is common to all the Apostles, the other is not so. You know that our Lord's great Work in this world was to put Salvation within the reach of all men. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." And if you look into the Gospel for this Festival, you will see that He called S. Andrew to this very work : "I will make you," said He, "fishers of men." Jesus called him to go forth in His footsteps through His Strength, and to cast the Gospel net into the deep sea of sin and ignorance.

around him, that so men might be drawn unto Christ by the cords of Love, and find an abundant entrance, through Him, into the Kingdom of God.

And so S. Andrew went forth, preaching wheresoever he went "The Gospel of Peace," and bringing everywhere the "Glad Tidings of Good Things." You may be interested to know what we are told in history, namely, that amongst other towns, he visited and preached in Sebastopol, a place you all know by name, some too well. But besides his work being of the same nature as that of his Lord, in striving to save the souls of men, he was like Jesus, obedient unto death, and that "even the death of the Cross." Jesus died upon the Cross, in order to fulfil the whole Will of God and to save men; and S. Andrew, in striving to do God's Will, and to preach Christ to the heathen,



PLAIN CHURCH TEACHING.

likewise met with his death. It was in this way : He came on his journey to a place called *Patrae*, in Achaia ; and to this city there also came, about the same time, the Governor of that part of the country. Now this Governor was a heathen, and he was much angered to find the great effect S. Andrew's preaching had had upon the people. At last, finding that he could not bring them back to their old heathen worship, he summoned the Apostle before him, and derided him for preaching the Gospel of Christ. But, far from silencing the Saint, he took occasion, there and then, to preach Christ to the Governor, and to tell how Jesus had died upon the Cross for all men. But this heathen ruler would not listen, and S. Andrew was sent back to prison. The next day, the Governor again called for, and argued with the Apostle, and again S. Andrew urged the reception

Christianity upon him. But at this the Governor gave orders for his death ; and first he was scourged—(in this, too, how like unto his Lord !)—and then crucified,—not with nails, but bound with cords to his cross, that his death might be the more lingering. Thus he hung for two days, preaching to and teaching the people all the time. The cross on which he suffered is supposed to have been in the shape of the letter X and you will often see this cross in pictures of S. Andrew ; it is commonly called S. Andrew's cross. Like our Blessed Lord, he was quite willing to die ; for we are told that when he saw the cross on which he was to suffer, he cried out with joy, saying, “ Hail, precious Cross ; . . . I come to thee exulting and glad ; receive me with joy into thine arms. Long have I desired and sought thee ; now thou art found by me, and art made ready for my longing

soul." And thus he died, on the 30th day of November, on which day we keep him in blessed memory; but in what year is not known.

And now what should we learn from this history? First, that this is especially one of the Festivals of the poor; for it is the day on which we commemorate the death of one who began life as a poor man, and yet died a Saint of God. Here, therefore, we also learn that no hard life, no hard work, need prevent us from following the Lord, and from becoming holy persons. For is it likely that God Who appoints each one's lot in life, would place any where it was impossible for them to serve Him?

Secondly, we are taught the grace of prompt, ready obedience to God's Voice, when He calls us to do His Will; and it is for this spirit we pray in the Collect.

Thirdly, we see how closely we should en-

deavour to follow our Lord, if we would be like unto Him and His Saints. We see how earnest we should be in our efforts to save, win, and reclaim sinners ; nay, that we should be ready, if God will, to "lay down our lives for the brethren," and to die, rather than dishonour God, or forsake the cause of Christ.

Lastly, we learn that it is when going about our daily work, in a right spirit, that we are most sure of finding God's blessing, and of hearing the voice of Jesus calling again and again, "Follow Me."

But before concluding, it will be well to be reminded of one other point, lest any should make a mistake on reading this narrative. We must remember that when our Lord called S. Andrew, as in to-day's Gospel, it was not the first time God had spoken to him. No, there had been a previous preparation for this

call. S. Andrew had been one of the disciples of S. John the Baptist, and had heard from him the wondrous words, "Behold the Lamb of God," at the time of the events already alluded to, as recorded in S. John's Gospel. After this, it would seem that S. Andrew returned to his usual trade as a fisherman, as it was about a year after this time that our Lord called him, as in to-day's Gospel, saying, "Follow Me." I daresay some of you have a good old book entitled "Nelson's Fasts and Festivals." If you have, and will turn to the chapter on S. Andrew's Day, you will see a great deal that I have repeated here.

Let us now strive to remember the great lessons of this Festival, and examine ourselves after reading S. Andrew's history. Let us see whether or not we are allowing poverty and care to come between our souls and God. Let

us see whether we are ever *ready* to hear the call of Jesus, when any still small voice seems to whisper in our hearts, as from Him, "Follow Me." And if we think we *are* following Him, let us each further enquire,—How closely am I following? Am I really walking in the Foot-prints of my Lord? Am I endeavouring to win souls for God, and to bring them to Jesus? Am I boldly confessing Christ? Am I willing to suffer anything rather than sin? O let us strive to do each day's work as to the Lord, that so whenever we hear His Voice, *we* may be found in the way of *Ready* Obedience.



Feast of S. Thomas the Apostle,

(DECEMBER 21.)



THE LOST BLESSING.

“Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”—*S. John* xx. 24.

THE Collect for to-day puts before us two particular thoughts,—namely, the unbelief of S. Thomas, and the faith after which we should all seek. It may, however, at once strike some, that it was strange that one who had been so long a follower of the Lord should fail in faith as S. Thomas did. Let us, then, try, by God's grace, to examine into the im-

- mediate cause of his failure, and the source from which it sprang.

Our text will suggest the explanation of the first difficulty. It tells us how, on the evening of the first Lord's Day, S. Thomas was absent from the assembly of the Apostles. We are told, "Thomas was not with them." And what were the consequences of his absence, what Blessing did he lose? The disciples were assembled with closed doors, in fear, because of the Jews, but *Jesus* came, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." They were, doubtless, much perplexed by all the wonderful events which had lately taken place, on Good Friday, and in the early morning of this Great Easter Day; but *Jesus* stilled all their perturbed thoughts, and strengthened their wavering faith, by showing to them His Hands and His Side. Then as, perchance, they again wondered as to

what they were to do, and as to what their work should be, He saluted them for the second time with His Peace, and gave them at once a direction for their future course, full of the deepest meaning,—“As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” Still further, lest they should be oppressed with a sense of their own inability to fulfil this awful Ministry, He breathed on them the strengthening gift of the Holy Ghost, and endued them with power like unto His Own. And all this personal intercourse with his risen Lord S. Thomas lost, and he lost it by being absent from the assembling of the Saints together. What wonder, then, that as he had not sought strength in company with God’s people, he should, when the trial came, be found wanting.

Now, it will be profitable to examine further, and see, if we can, *why* S. Thomas, especially

at this perplexing time, conducted himself as we have seen, keeping away from the very means which, if rightly used, would have solved all his difficulties. It seems very probable that the cause of his absence was some undue giving way to his natural disposition. He appears by nature to have been slow of understanding, and liable to be easily depressed ; and it may be that he stayed at home nursing his grief by himself, thinking of his own doubts and difficulties, remembering only his dear Lord's Death and Burial, and quite forgetting His promise, as others also did, that in three days He would rise again. Be this as it may, one thing is quite certain, that, by his absence, he lost for the present, all the comfort he might have had, in the sympathy of friends, and fellowship with the Saints ; and more than this, when the disciples came to him with gladness, saying, "We

have seen the Lord," the despondency of S. Thomas seems to have held his faith in check, so that he could not believe the joyful tidings. And if we act as S. Thomas did, it will be exactly the same with us. If we allow a gloomy depression to get the better of us, and to keep us from the House of the Lord, we too shall undoubtedly miss the special Presence of Jesus ever awaiting us there, and we shall miss the giving of that Peace "which passeth all understanding." Remember that even the Psalmist found some things too hard for him to understand, until he went into the House of God, and *then* he understood. Let us not fall into this snare of keeping away from the Sanctuary; let us not cut ourselves off from the fellowship of the Saints, of which we read in the Epistle. We do not stand alone, neither are we any more "strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens

with the Saints, and of the household of God.” And if we are sad, or burdened, or perplexed, we should not keep our care nursed up to ourselves at home, but take it to the House of the Lord, that by His Grace, and blessing on united prayer, we may *leave* it with Him.

All that we have said is very strikingly confirmed by the conclusion of the history in to-day’s Gospel. For it was when S. Thomas, as in the next week, *joined* in the worship of God with his Christian brethren, that his doubts were at length perfectly satisfied, and his faith made strong. There is, indeed, here a great lesson for us. We see in the whole narrative, how easy it is, even for those who have long run well, to leave the right path from one cause or other, and that doing so they are sure to suffer loss. We see, also, the great mercy of the Lord, Who is ever ready to meet those who at length



come to Him, and grant them even more than they desire or deserve.

But perhaps some may say, "Why should we think on this day, which is set apart for honouring one of God's Saints and God in him, of something which seems to have been a sad flaw in the character of S. Thomas?" Very humbly, and in much self-abasement, let us think and speak of it, remembering ourselves; lest we also be tempted. I think we may discover several reasons, first, with regard to God, and secondly, with regard to His Apostle. First, the Mercy of God in this narrative is made all the more remarkable by the previous recital of the unbelief of S. Thomas; and we are alike struck by the tender forbearance of the Lord, and His condescension even to the most minute difficulties of His servant. Secondly, the faith of S. Thomas, and his life-long service, shine all



the brighter, because we are told of the difficulties which at first beset his path. He was of those who *overcame*, and, through the grace of God, won a perfect victory. His words, so full of nature, "Except I shall see I will not believe," giving place to the glorious confession, "My Lord, and my God."

And now we have seen the failure, even of an Apostle, let us be warned by it, remembering that the holiest stand only by God's grace. S. Thomas was in distress, and allowed it to keep him away from the worship of God, when by his trouble he should the rather have been drawn to it; and thus he lost the blessing of the confirmation of his faith. Lastly, he required visible proof of that which he ought to have been willing to receive from the lips of others. How like this to many in our own day who are not willing to believe what the Church

of God teaches except they *understand* it. And yet, let us remember, as in the Apostle's time, it was only in that little company of the disciples that the Truth in its fulness was really to be found, so now there is no *fulness* of Truth except in the company of the faithful,—in the one True Church of God. Let us, then, be willing to take her teaching in a simple, child-like spirit, remembering our Lord's words, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

And now we must try and gather what became of S. Thomas when he went forth strong in faith, as S. Andrew did in ready obedience, to preach the Gospel. There is a beautiful legend that, as he came in his travels to Persia, he met with and baptized the Wise Men who, you will recollect, came on a long journey to



find the Lord when He was a little child at Bethlehem. If this were so, it was in perfect accordance with God's ordinary dealings, when any have proved faithful to His grace, for to such He ever gives greater and more abundant stores of His riches, and we cannot but believe that the loving devotion of the Wise Men would bring down upon them, through Christ, fresh streams of Grace and Blessing. Thus, it is said that S. Thomas met with and baptized them, and took them along with him as his companions in the Ministry. But the great and final scene of his labours was in India, and traces of them remain in that country to the present day, a body of Christians in the south of India still professing to have derived their rites and customs from S. Thomas. It is related that the Apostle was at first affrighted at the prospect of penetrating into the wilds of that heathen land with

the message of the Gospel, but that being encouraged by God in a Vision, and assured of the Divine Presence in his difficulties, he persevered. His labours were crowned with great success, though strenuously opposed by those who were enemies to the spread of the Truth. It is not certain how S. Thomas met with his death, but all accounts agree that he died for the Truth. We are told that as he was engaged in prayer, a band of armed men fell upon him, and that after having assailed him with stones and darts, one of them despatched him by running him through with a spear. Thus, it is said, S. Thomas died ; and, as S. Andrew's Day is one to be especially loved by the poor, so is the Festival of S. Thomas, in a peculiar manner, one to be venerated by depressed and doubting Christians. To them his example especially speaks ; and our Lord on this day is

ever calling unto them, "Be not faithless but believing." O may the answer from each one who hears that call for ever be, "My Lord and my God." So, the more troubled and perplexed we are, so much the more let us seek the Presence of God in His Holy House of Prayer : not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, "as the manner of some is," lest we lose the blessing of the Lord, and separate ourselves from the "Communion of Saints," in which we profess to believe.



S. Stephen's Day,

(*DECEMBER 26.*)



LOOKING UPWARDS IN TROUBLE.

“Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into Heaven.”—*Acts* vii. 55.

THERE are two Collects appointed to be read on this Holy Day, as you will see if you refer to the direction, or *rubric*, placed at the head of the Epistle, from which our text is taken. The first Collect is that for S. Stephen's Day, the second that for Christmas, as if to show us that all virtue, and all holiness, alike spring from the same Source, namely, from our Lord Jesus Christ, God made Man, and as at

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this time manifested in the Flesh at Bethlehem. It was only yesterday that we sung the Song of the Angels, and welcomed our New-Born King and Saviour ; and to-day, it would seem that the Church seeks to moderate our joy, so soon liable to go too far, by bringing before us at once the pattern of S. Stephen, and thus showing us that if we would seek true and everlasting joy, it must be by the way of the Cross,—it must be by joy and gladness in the midst of suffering. We are very apt to forget this, and, as we rejoice at Christmas, we do not remember as we ought the Life of suffering which Jesus then began for us ; how He came into the world for our sakes, in great Weakness, that we might be strong ; in great Poverty, that we might have the abundance of Heavenly Riches.

It is well that our minds should be recalled on this Feast of S. Stephen, and that we should

remember, that if we would win Heaven, and bring forth, by God's grace, the fruits of our Blessed Lord's Incarnation and Birth, we must be prepared to enter with Him the path of sorrow and self-denial ; and further, if we would share in the Glory of His Resurrection, we must first be partakers of His Death ; if we would win with His Saints the Crown of Glory, we must be willing, after their example, to do so through suffering.

The three Saint's Days which are kept holy immediately after Christmas, represent to us the different ways in which all true Christians follow in their Master's Footsteps ; and they seem to have been placed by the Church close upon the Birthday of Jesus Christ, to show what should be the lives of those who, as it were, especially, wait around their King,—even those who, living the life on earth of the “pure in

heart," are preparing for that unspeakable Glory hereafter to be revealed, wherein "they shall see God." S. Stephen is a pattern, or type, of those who are not only *willing* to suffer death for the cause of Jesus, but who do so suffer. He is an example of the highest degree of sanctity or saintliness, a Martyr both in will and in deed. His Day, then, comes the very next to Christmas Day, showing how very close to Jesus such Saints stand, and the spirit we should seek to have, if we would follow in the steps of S. Stephen, as he followed Christ : and with him be very near unto our Lord. But perhaps some may say, "How can I be really like S. Stephen,—he actually died for the Truth?" Yes, it was even so. And though we may not be called to lay down our natural lives for Christ, yet we, too, must each of us die a real, actual death, if we would be truly holy. *We* must die, that

Christ may live in us. All that opposes the Grace of God within us must be mortified and slain ; we, too, must be martyrs both in will and deed, that is, we must bear witness by a very death unto sin, and by a faithful confession of our Lord, to the Truth of the Word of God. And do we know anything of this deadly warfare,—this bold confession of Christ,—this fight between sin and holiness,—this fearless declaring Whose we are and Whom we serve ? Then this day will be a blessed and helpful one to us.

S. Stephen's character seems to have been the exact opposite of that of S. Thomas. Had S. Thomas had the stedfast upward gaze of S. Stephen, the intense looking up into Heaven of which we read to-day, instead of his downward gaze, his depressed and hopeless view of things, how soon would his doubts have been dispersed !

And this seems to bring us to our special lesson for the day, and to the title of our Reading, namely, "Looking upwards in trouble,"—particularly in that suffering which comes upon us for the testimony of God's Truth,—suffering, that is, "for Righteousness' sake." What a view of the Christian course does the Collect for the day bring before us! It speaks in language which, alas! seems almost unreal, in these days of ease and pleasure, of carelessness and sin. It seems to belong to the days of persecution and trial long past. Yet these words belong to each one of us, they are put into the mouths of every baptized child within our Church. Truly, should they not make us blush, when we pray, "Grant, O Lord, that, in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy Truth, we may stedfastly look up to Heaven." *All our sufferings here upon earth*

for the testimony of God's Truth! Have we ever suffered anything for the testimony of the Truth? We cannot say we have lacked opportunity for such suffering; but have we so suffered, or have we by cowardice escaped the suffering? I am afraid the latter has too often been the case. There are, no doubt, bright exceptions to this rule. We do hear of such things as even children being strengthened by God to bear witness for Him. We hear occasionally of the school-boy, who persevered regularly in saying his prayers, in spite of the persecutions of his companions; or of the young girl, who persisted in speaking the truth, in spite of the threatening of the wicked. Blessed be God for such instances as these! But how many more alas! yield to the laugh, or the taunt, or the threatening, and thus range themselves, not on the side of God and of His Saints, but

on the side of Satan and his fallen angels. And, personally, what have *we* suffered for Christ? what are all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of God's Truth? When young, did we hold on doing right, in spite of reproach? In service, were we faithful unto Jesus, not being ashamed to show to Whom we belonged? And, if service led to married life, how was that life lived? Did marriage help onward in the ways of God? It should have done so; but alas! perchance it was not "in the Lord." If this was, indeed, the case with any, let me ask, did you determine still to be faithful to your God? Did you persevere in Church-going, and in attendance on Holy Communion, whether your partner in life cared for such things or not? Did you thus confess Christ? Did you suffer loneliness in God's House, and at His Table, rather than forsake Him? Did

you witness for His Truth by a gentle, loving, holy life at home ? O ! if we knew the joy of faithful service ; O ! if we had tasted the peace of doing right, of looking to Jesus for strength in the midst of suffering for His Name's sake, we should at least be enabled in some sort to feel that He is a very present Help in trouble, and to understand something of S. Stephen's joy, when in Faith, and Hope, and Love, he "looked up stedfastly into Heaven," even from the very midst of his enemies ! But alas ! where are *our* Faith, *our* Hope, *our* Love ; where are our sufferings for Christ's Truth ?

One word, however, to those who *are* so suffering. To such there comes on this Day of S. Stephen a message of deep consolation. Perhaps all around seems dark,—temptations to give up appear to thicken,—the voice of the blasphemer and scorner, perchance, waxes louder

and louder,—the night seems, in truth, to gather
ever you. But do not lose heart. Have you
ever noticed how, in an exceeding dark night,
when there is no moon apparent in the heavens
to cheer us, and when a thick sable curtain
seems drawn over the sky, that, if you look very
earnestly and stedfastly upward, you begin by
agreeing to distinguish, one by one, star after
star, shining out in the midst of the gloom, as
a reward for your fixed gaze. Just so in trouble,
though all seems dark beneath and around us,
there is never wholly so *above* us,—there is always
some glimpse, at least, of God's Mercy, for the
earnest upward-gazing soul. But to-day's lesson
carries us further and higher still, and our
thoughts, in trouble or suffering, are not only
raised to the hope of glimpses of God's Mercy
in trial, shining forth, *if we look for them*, as
stars in a dark night, but to the sight, by faith,

of the Glory of God, and of Jesus standing at His Right Hand,—suffering once, but in glory now ; dying once, but living now ; and in the future Glory to be revealed.

In the Gospel for to-day, our Blessed Lord foretold what should be the fate of those in this world found faithful unto Him. The Epistle in the account of S. Stephen's martyrdom, gives us a fulfilment of His words. S. Stephen is the first conscious martyr, or witness of the New Testament. He was one of those chosen by the Apostles to watch over the necessities of the poor, and was, we are told, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," being enabled by the Power of God to do great wonders and miracles among the people. But, in spite of all this, there were many that were opposed to him nevertheless, though they disputed with him "they were not able to resist the wisdom and th

spirit, by which he spake." Then they brought him to the council, and bore false witness against him; and after these things we are told that, "all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." We know not what the wonderful appearance was which called forth this description; but it would seem that, at the mention of the Holy Name of Jesus, S. Stephen's heart kindled within him, and, being permitted so to do, he proceeded with his great defence, bringing home to his hearers the truth, that the same Jesus of Nazareth, Whom they had dared to despise,—as in the 14th verse of the 6th chapter of the Acts,—was in very deed that "Just One" of Whom their own Scriptures spoke, and of Whom they had been "the betrayers and murderers." Then came the last scene, for "when they heard these things, they were cut to the

heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth.' Little, however, heeded S. Stephen! What had *he* to fear who had boldly confessed his Lord, and who, being filled with the Holy Ghost, had within his very soul the abiding Presence of God? Surrounded as he was by his enemies, his Faith, his Hope, his Love, were fixed on Him Whom he well knew had ascended into the Heavens, victorious in man's nature "conquering and to conquer." Mindful of all this, he lifted up his eyes, "and looked steadfastly into Heaven," beyond the everlasting hills, to the place whence his Help came, and O wondrous Vision! O wondrous words! "saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing the Right Hand of God, and said, Behold, I the Heavens opened, and the Son of God standing on the Right Hand of God." And a gaze was his, not merely at, but *int*

Heavens ; so intense, so earnest, so fixed ! But his enemies were all the more enraged against him, and cried out with a loud voice, and ran upon him and stoned him : “ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ; and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep.”

And now we might multiply almost indefinitely the lessons of this beautiful Feast,—the Festival especially of those who are suffering, however humbly, for Righteousness’ sake. Let such “ lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees ;” and when surrounded by temptation and darkness, or encompassed by enemies, let them ever remember the example of the first martyr S. Stephen, and, in all their sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of

the Truth, be found with their Faith and Hope and Love fixed upon their Lord. Thus shall they evermore be strengthened, either by glimpses of the Love of God, shining as stars through the night of their trial, or by such a Sight by Faith of the Glory to be revealed, that they shall, each one, prove to the full the truth of the Psalmist, "The Lord also will be a defence for the oppressed, even a refuge in due time of trouble. And they that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee, for Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek Thee."



S. John the Evangelist's Day.

(*DECEMBER 27.*)



TARRYING THE LORD'S LEISURE.

"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?
Follow thou Me."—*S. John*, xxi. 22.

YOU will remember that I said in yesterday's reading, that these three Saints' Days give us examples of the different ways in which God's people are called upon to serve Him.

S. Stephen was a pattern of those who are martyrs for His sake, both in will and deed; while to-day, the beloved disciple S. John, is a type of such as are *willing* to suffer for Jesus, but who are rather bidden by the Lord to wait

His pleasure. Thus we are brought face to face with a great truth, namely, that suffering for Christ's sake is only well-pleasing in His Sight, when it is in entire accordance with His Will; and in order to be so, it must spring from love. As saith S. Paul, "Though I give my body to be burned and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing." It is well to be reminded of this on S. John's day, when we are especially directed to his example who was himself emphatically the Apostle of Love. Nothing, indeed, but this gift of Divine Charity, of love to God, and love to man, for God's sake, could have sustained him in the path of trial he was called upon to tread. His was a peculiar special probation, an intense and particular death unto self. Nevertheless some even are called to be tried in the same way,—in degree, at least in kind. To such, t

lesson especially speaks, "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure."

What, then, may we suppose was S. John's peculiar trial? This, I should imagine, that he was willing to endure much, which God did not permit him to suffer. Willing to die for his Lord's sake, yet commanded instead thereof to live for Him! Willing to fulfil all things, and to gain the Martyr's Crown, yet bidden the rather to tarry yet awhile, and to bear the Saint's Cross. He lived to see one after another of his companions in the faith die a glorious death, but he was himself called to wait. He saw his fellow Apostles journeying to distant countries in order to preach the Gospel, while, as we shall see, a sacred duty kept him, probably for years, bound to Judea. And then when on the very eve, as it seemed, of martyrdom, God called His servant back

again from a fiery death, to live for Him, though in banishment and exile, and at length to die in old age a natural death. How often in S. John's life do we seem to hear the voice of Jesus, as it were in restraining love, saying, "Patience, my servant," "Not yet, my son," "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure," "To *obey* is better than sacrifice."

We see in to-day's lesson, how the holiest, and the most saintly, still need the direction of their Lord for every step, even in their efforts to serve and please Him; and that the very Church herself is in constant need of the Divine Light in order to know the Divine Will. So on this Festival her petition is, "Merciful Lord, we beseech Thee, cast Thy bright beams of Light upon Thy Church, that it . . . may so walk in the Light of Thy Truth, that it may at length attain to the Light of everlasting Life."

Here we also see again what we have before so often noticed, that there must be obedience here on earth, if we would have the Reward of Obedience hereafter. We must walk in the Light of God's Truth, if we would attain to the Light of everlasting Life. And to-day we are especially directed to one source for all our teaching, namely, the Grace of God, as seen in the doctrine of the "Blessed Apostle and Evangelist S. John." This is, as it were, the very centre of the Collect. We are on this day to learn of him, as he learned of Christ. Hence, in accordance with this thought, the Church has chosen both the Epistle and Gospel from the writings of S. John.

The Gospel brings before us the time when our Lord was still on the earth, after His resurrection from the grave, during which period He taught His disciples the deep mysteries of His

Kingdom. At that time, when S. John heard the words of our text, he was, as is supposed, the youngest of all the Apostles. It was then he first heard from the lips of Jesus the mysterious discipline of his life, hereafter to be unfolded,—“If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ; follow thou Me.” In the Epistle, we find S. John, the aged Saint, ready to depart and to be with Christ, but still called to practice the lesson he had learnt in his youth, —still tarrying the Lord’s leisure.

And now, what grace could alone have sustained S. John in the obedience of his life, and what is the whole sum of his doctrine to which we are especially this day directed ; is it not Love ? That such was the Apostle’s abiding thought is beautifully illustrated by what we are told of his old age. It is recorded, that when so infirm that he was obliged to be carried into



the assembly of the faithful, and was no longer able to preach at any length to the people, his only exhortation to them from time to time was in these words, "My dear children, love one another." And when his hearers, wearied with the constant repetition of the same words, asked why he thus spoke to them so often the same thing, he replied, "Because it is the precept of the Lord, and if you comply with it, you do enough." We must, then, consider Divine Love or Charity as the secret, the key-note, of S. John's life. But as this grace is so contrary to nature, and yet so absolutely necessary for us, it is for this reason that we so especially need the Divine Light, spoken of alike in the Collect and Epistle for to-day, that we may be enabled to discover, and imitate, the Love to God and man, which shines so brightly in the life and writings of S. John.

And now it is time that we should consider, though very briefly, some of the particulars of the life of the Apostle. In the earlier part of it, we know, S. John was remarkable for his singular privileges amongst our Lord's disciples. He was the beloved Apostle, who was suffered to lean upon Jesus' Breast. It was he, also, who, in the last terrible hour, "stood by the Cross of Jesus," and received from Him the charge of His blessed Mother; and was likewise put by our Lord into the position of her son, in the words, "Behold thy son," "Behold thy Mother." This charge we know from Holy Scripture S. John at once fulfilled, for we read, "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." We read in history, further, that S. John probably did not leave Judea for his more distant labours in the Gospel, until the blessed Mother of our Lord had been taken to

her rest. So that we may well picture his tender reverent care for her during the remaining years of her life, hitherto one so full of heart-rendering sorrow. After this sacred charge was fulfilled, he went forth to preach the Gospel, his chief place of residence being the city of Ephesus. But this time of waiting in Judea seems to have been the first lesson S. John had in the teaching of his Lord, "If I will that he tarry till I come." Our Lord had first uttered these words in order to check S. Peter's curiosity, and to bring home to him the truth, that the great question for him was not so much as to the manner in which *others* should follow Christ, but rather, as to how he himself was following his Lord.

There are several ways of explaining the words of the text, but let us to-day especially consider them with reference to the fact that

S. John was called to wait for the coming of his Lord to him by a natural death, rather than to follow Him in a violent one ; and then let us draw from these words, in connection with the life of the Apostle, a lesson of patient waiting in all things for the guidance of the Lord. This was, very probably, as we have said, the grace which S. John was learning during his detention in Judea, when he was performing the duties of a son to the blessed Mother of our Lord. Here he waited about fifteen years ; and this, I think, puts before us a beautiful lesson of filial piety, for all those who are tempted to serve God in their own way, rather than to wait His time, and who long for other duties and other crosses, rather than to take up those which are around their daily path.

But a more wonderful trial still awaited the Apostle. Long after this time, after years spent

in the Ministry of the Word, he was taken prisoner by command of the Emperor Domitian, on account of his zeal in preaching the Gospel, and was sent to Rome. There, in spite of his venerable age, the emperor commanded him to be thrown into a caldron of burning oil. Doubtless, the Saint now believed that he was about to be allowed to follow his Lord by a glorious martyrdom, and willingly complied with the dreadful sentence, knowing right well on Whom he had believed. But it was not so, and it pleased God to deliver him from this terrible death, even as in earlier times He had delivered His servants from the den of lions and the burning fiery furnace. Thus, once more was the Apostle restrained from offering all he was willing to offer unto the Lord. God's Will, not his, was even in this to be his rule. Perchance now S. John felt assured of freedom, and

imagined that after his enemies had witnessed his signal deliverance, they would leave him at liberty to pursue his work of preaching the Gospel. But again it was not so, and he was banished by the Emperor into the desolate island of Patmos, where, however, he instructed the inhabitants in the faith of Christ, and wrote his great work, the Book of the Revelation. Here he remained several years, until a new Emperor arose, in whose reign S. John was enabled to return to Ephesus, where, as you will find narrated in *Nelson's Fasts and Festivals*, he governed the Church in the room of S. Timothy, who had been lately martyred, and wrote his Gospel. At length he was called to his rest, and fell asleep in the Lord, being nearly one hundred years old.

And now, what is our special lesson to-day? Surely this, that if we would be like unto

S. John, *willing* to suffer anything in the cause of Christ, we must also strive to learn the lesson he learnt, and in all our desires to serve and please God, be ready to abide the will of the Lord, patiently waiting the revelation of His good pleasure concerning us, and so tarrying the Lord's leisure. Thus will our only care be how we can indeed please Him, rendering unto Him in our daily lives, by patient continuance in well-doing, the Obedience of Love.



Holy Innocents' Day.

(DECEMBER 28.)



SUFFERING THROUGH THE FAULT
OF OTHERS.

“They are without fault before the Throne of God.”

Rev. xiv. 5.

IT would be well if we all considered more than we do, the great selfishness of sin, the cruelty of it, and its injustice. We can seldom sin, even in what would be considered slight faults, without bringing, at least, annoyance or discomfort on others ; while in grave faults, and especially in grievous sin, none can ever indulge,

as a rule, without involving others in ruin or sorrow.

To-day we celebrate a Festival which commemorates a very terrible instance of this truth. Let us examine it. What was the cause of the murder of the Holy Innocents, as to-day recorded in the Gospel? Was it their own sin which had brought upon them this destruction? Not so. Rather we may believe they were all in covenant with God even at their tender age, and that they were, through circumcision in the Jewish Church, in a similar position with regard to it as baptized children are with regard to the Church of God in these days. Thus we find that in the vision of S. John, he saw in after years the company of the redeemed in Heaven, and amongst them those who were “the *first-fruits* unto God and to the Lamb.” “And in their mouth was found no guile; for they

are without fault before the Throne of God." Such is the passage chosen by the Church to-day for the Epistle of this Festival. But though the Holy Innocents are thus described as themselves "without fault before the Throne," yet it was *sin*, even the sin of others, which was the cause of their death. They were martyrs in deed, but not in will ; patterns to all time of those who suffer through the fault of others, and are themselves found in the ways of purity and guilelessness. It has been supposed that this slaughter of the little ones in Bethlehem was a terrible judgment of God upon that locality for its rejection of Christ, for Whom, whilst yet unborn, we know there was found no room in Bethlehem, no, not even "in the inn." But however this may be, we are certain of one thing, namely, that the death of these innocent children was caused by the cruelty of Herod.



And his heartless command for their slaughter sprang—from what ? Even so mean and selfish a root as jealousy, that is, a jealous fear of rival claims to his throne and power. See the littleness of these feelings, and how selfish they were ! And yet, indulged in by one man, they led to the attempted murder of the Son of God, when still a Babe, and to the actual slaughter of the Holy Innocents, thus bringing desolation of a most heart-rending kind over a whole country ! O, ye who have children of your own, ye who are parents, think on these things. Remember that in giving way to sin, and in not recognising God's Hand in the visitations of His Providence, when He comes to you in Truth, though after a hidden and mysterious manner, you are, may be, laying up in store for your little ones the judgments of God, and they may in after years be visited because of your sin. Think of this,

all ye, parents or otherwise, young or old, who are indulging in any known sin. You cannot, as we have before said, indulge in sin without injury to others. Your selfishness, it may be, is bringing down a father's or a mother's "gray hairs with sorrow to the grave,"—is breaking a sister's heart,—is working the ruin of others,—is the cause of a wife's poverty, or of children hungering for bread. Not that you meant it so at first, but, just as Herod's miserable envy and jealousy led to the murder of innocent children, so your personal self-indulgence, more miserable still, in eating and drinking, in extravagance and sin, is leading you, you well know, to all those things which I have mentioned ; and thus you inflict suffering on others through your fault. Many a man would start, if asked the question, "Do you mean to break your wife's heart, to cause your children to starve?" and yet

all that, he works out these very calamities, by his own daily renewed acts of sin. But there is a God Who sees all and notes all, and "that will by no means clear the guilty." Only those "*without fault*" can stand before the Throne, namely, those who "have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb."

But now there is an entirely different part of to-day's subject to consider. Let us ponder it, and leave the thought of those persons who, may be, cause our suffering or trial, remembering that to-day is the Festival of comfort for all those who suffer, or are tried, through the fault of others. Let us see wherein the comfort lies. First, in thought of the Truth, which we have before briefly noticed, and which we find all through Holy Scripture, that God sees and notes the oppression, and grief, and

pain of all His creatures,—“Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father.” This is the teaching of Jesus Himself; and is He not “The Father of the fatherless, defending the cause of the widow?” Yes, truly. And when father and mother forsake He taketh up the little ones; and when the hand of the wicked is raised up, He is mindful of His own, and remembereth His children. Was it not so in the case of the Holy Innocents, whom He raised to be martyrs in His Church, and to stand before Him in Glory—faultless. See, then, how “His Mercy is over all His works,” and how much more peculiarly over His believing and loving people. To such we would say yet another word, and remind them of another thought. Does it seem a strange trial to you, when you suffer through the fault of others,—hard to bear,—difficult to understand?



Let us think once more of the children of Bethlehem. We have seen how sin was the immediate cause of their death ; but to Christ's believing yet suffering people, we would speak of another cause. Their death was really the consequence of the Birth of Jesus. And how did He begin His Life on earth ? In poverty, in cold, in weakness. Can we wonder, then, that the "*first-fruits*" of His suffering Life should be gathered in the midst of suffering ? can we wonder that we His people should likewise be called to suffer ? All our Lord's sufferings were caused by the sins of others,—by *our* sins,—by the sins of the whole world ; and He bore them so patiently, so enduringly, that at last He gained the hearts even of His enemies. O try and follow His example Who "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

And if in the course of your daily lives you are called to suffer much through others' fault, remember the example of Jesus, and strive, by patient love and gentleness, to win the hearts of those who oppress you. Be not disheartened, but "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. . . . Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

And here we are brought back to the Collect for the day, and to the lesson for all classes of persons which it contains. It is a lesson of threefold teaching in holiness. There is, first, the death unto sin; then the Life unto God, by the aid of His strengthening Grace; and then the persevering constancy in this life, even unto death. All this we pray for, and it is in this we see what should be our aim. But in the Collect there is no mention of reward. And this seems

to convey to us a special lesson of great beauty. It speaks to each one of us, as it were, saying, "Fear not for the reward, if thy work is done ; doubt not of the Crown, if thou art faithful unto death ; think thou of the Glory of the Lord, and He will not forget thee."

In the Epistle we have a revelation of the blessedness of those who endure to the end. We hear, as it were, "The Voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and the voice of a great thunder, and the voice of harpers, harping with their harps." And what do these three voices from Heaven seem to say to us ? First, there is the voice described as the voice of many waters, that is, the voice of the redeemed faithful ones, gathered out of all lands, out of all people, and kindreds, and tongues, united in one song of praise, one stream of melody, flowing unceasingly into the ocean of God's Love. Then

there is the voice as of a great thunder. This is the voice of warning, lest we think only of the radiance of Heaven, and forget the sharp path of trial which must lead us there. And then, lastly, there is the voice of harpers, harping with their harps,—this is the voice of triumph of those who have *overcome*. And would we share the Reward of the Saints in Glory, we must likewise share now in the pathway of the Cross. If we would at the last stand with them before the Throne, we must strive to be holy now. Yes; if we would stand *with them*. In one sense, you know, we shall all stand there,—“When the Great White Throne is set, and the books are opened.” But will it be *with them*,—with the Holy Innocents, with the pure in heart, with those in whose mouth is found no guile? If we would have it so, then, let us not only enquire, in the words of the Psalmist, saying,

“ Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill,” but receive his answer as the guide along our pilgrim way, “ Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart.” Such, and such only, will be found at the last among the undefiled ones, and to such alone is the promise made,— “ They shall see God.”

Pray we, then, with all our hearts the prayer of the Collect, saying, “ O Almighty God, Who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify Thee by their deaths, mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy Grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify Thy Holy Name ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”



The Conversion of S. Paul.

(JANUARY 25.)



THE CHANGED WILL.

“ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do.”—*Acts ix. 6.*

WE hear a great deal from time to time about conversion to God ; and we come across those who can tell us when they were converted, even to the very day and hour. And there is, thus far, nothing wrong. For, could not S. Paul look back, and say with truth, in his defence before King Agrippa, “ As I went to Damascus at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a Light from Heaven.” S. Paul could thus



date his conversion from a definite time, and doubtless many and many a soul can truthfully do the same. And, indeed, does not the very keeping of this Festival in the Church, seem to assure all of sympathy within her bosom who have in any degree been brought to the knowledge of God in the same way as S. Paul.

To-day is especially the Feast of such ; a day for them alike of sympathy and warning. But why should I speak of *warning*? Does the word seem a stern one on a Festival like this? If so, it is but the needful balance in our comment on the service of to-day. Like unto the words we have noticed in another season of rejoicing, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." And why do I say this? Because on the subject of sudden and startling conversion there are likely to be great mistakes made. People are very apt to take up one part of the

narrative of to-day, and to leave out the remainder. They forget especially, it is to be feared, that which was the great proof of S. Paul's conversion,—I mean, a change of will, and a life agreeable to the same.

The consequences of this forgetfulness or ignorance are truly appalling. I have myself seen or known of such cases as the following : I have stood by the sick bed of one who never more rose from it,—one reputed as a marked instance of conversion in the neighbourhood in which she lived. The mother of the poor sufferer told me almost the exact date of the time in which she and her daughter gave, as she expressed it, "their hearts to Christ." And yet, that very sick woman, as it was discovered, was then living, and had been for years living, in open sin, as she afterwards confessed ; deceiving and being deceived, evidently not in the



least understanding that, if she were indeed a truly converted person, she must leave her sin. I have known, too, of another, who professed to have been converted under a certain preacher, and yet who was deliberately practising a gross fraud, if indeed nothing worse.

And with such cases as these before us, shall we not take warning, shall we not be firmly persuaded, that there is no reason to believe in any so-called sudden conversion, unless there be the same proof of its reality which we see in the case of S. Paul,—I mean, a thorough *change of will*,—a turning from the service of Satan to the service of God,—from the movements of our own will to the fulfilment of the Will of Christ,—from the absorbing thought of self, to thought for, and labour for, the good of others.

That such was the great change which took place in S. Paul, we are assured by comparing

the portions of the narrative concerning him in the Epistle for to-day, taken from the ninth chapter of the Acts. In the first verse we find him "Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," and requesting power from the High Priest, to bring all such, whom he could seize in Damascus, as prisoners to Jerusalem. In the third and fourth verses, we have the account of the sudden call of God to him, by which his headlong course was stayed. In the fifth and sixth verses, we read of the converse which then followed between Saul and his ascended Lord; and behold! he who had gone on his way to persecute all who were followers of Jesus, was now "trembling and astonished" at His Presence; and his words show the mighty change wrought in his heart, when he addresses that Lord, Whom he had, in His members, persecuted, saying, "Lord, what

wilt *Thou* have me to do ?” No more breathings out now of threatening and slaughter, but the faltering forth of the gentle newborn will, in humble child-like prayer, for the guidance of Jesus. We then read, in the twentieth verse, of how he became an active labourer in the vineyard of Christ, to the great glory of God, and the edification of the Church.

And now, what *was* the change wrought in S. Paul? It was not merely that abundant light had been shed upon him in the way, or that he had heard the Voice of the Lord from Heaven. But the whole principle of his life was changed. He saw God’s Will, where before he had not recognised it, and from henceforth his one desire was to *do* it.

O! if there be any amongst us, who believe ourselves converted persons, let us look well to ~~this~~ point. Let us ask ourselves, what is the

language of our hearts. Is it, Lord, I will serve Thee, but it shall be in a way of my own ; I will serve Thee, but I must also keep this one sin ? or, is it, “ Lord, I will follow Thee *whithersoever* Thou goest,”—“ Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do ?” It is necessary that we should look faithfully to all this, lest we rest satisfied with a half-turning to God,—lest we should, in any measure, be like unto those whom we have described, who allowed themselves to be deceived with the thought that they could keep their sins, and yet pass for converted persons. For a while, indeed, they perhaps did so before men, but how was it in the sight of God ?—in the eyes of Him Who cannot behold evil or look upon iniquity, and Who declares that into Heaven there cannot enter “ whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.”

I would advise, then, any who have the bright



hope that God has indeed turned their hearts to Him,—and what a bright hope, and, in many cases, what a true hope that is!—to search out diligently all that concerns the narrative of S. Paul's conversion, and to compare their own experience with his. We read in his case rather of trembling astonishment than of assurance; and the prominent feature of the history is not rapture or exultation, but rather, lowest prostration of deep humility, and, *in will*, a perfect obedience. It is this last which must ever be the real test of all conversion to God, implying as it does, the willing leaving of all sin, and the desire to follow in all holiness. Many and various will indeed ever be the ways in which God leads divers souls unto Himself, and unto His Peace. But, by whatever pathway they come to Him, there will always be in their case this unfailing test, if they be truly the people of

God, namely, a change of will, and a spirit of obedience shown by a lowly and minute attention to the whole Will of God. How can we believe for one moment that those who are living in open violation of God's laws are truly converted persons ; how can those who are dealing dishonestly with their neighbours be God's own people ? Whatever profession they may make, we answer, the Word of God declares, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." When the impure is made clean, we will believe you ; when the insincere is found dealing truly with his neighbour, then may we hope that these are indeed proofs of a change of heart. And so, in to-day's Collect, we find that the prayer of the Church is, that we may be obedient, by following the holy doctrine which S. Paul taught. She does not ask to-day for feelings, or for highly wrought frames of mind, but she does

ask that we may follow the holy teaching of S. Paul, and we know what one of the first of his believing words were, so full of teaching to us, " Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do ?"

In the Epistle we have, as we have seen, the account of his wonderful conversion ; and in the Gospel is put before us the self-denying suffering which all God's people must be prepared to undergo if He wills, and which almost all the early saints did endure, after their conversion to God. Amongst the most distinguished of these was S. Paul, and I think you will like to know something of his life after the Bible history concerning him closes, and of how he sealed the record of his long labours, and his sufferings for Christ's sake, by his death.

S. Paul's great calling amongst the Apostles was, as you know, to preach Christ, not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles also ; and so

laborious and far-distant were his missionary journeys, that it is supposed he visited and preached even in our own land. He afterwards returned to Rome, and was cast into prison ; but what peculiarly excited the displeasure of the Emperor in his case is not known. His execution, however, was resolved upon. His death was different to that of any of the Saints we have been considering. It is supposed that, like our Blessed Lord and S. Andrew, he was first scourged, being bound to a pillar, and then led forth to be beheaded, since, being a Roman citizen, it was not lawful for him to be crucified, death by crucifixion being reserved as the punishment for the worst and lowest malefactors. S. Paul was beheaded in the 68th year of his age, after thirty-five years of incessant labours. This was the fruit of his conversion, and the proof of its wondrous truth.

What, then, in brief, is our lesson for this Festival? First, that no conversion must ever satisfy us as genuine, unless there be, as its first-fruit, a spirit of thorough obedience to the law and the Will of God. And second, that we must not be contented, or rest in a present obedience, and a present state of grace, but must remember that S. Paul's whole life was spent in making his calling and election sure; and that if with him we would in due season reap, we must faint not, even through a life-long obedience. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."



The Presentation of Christ in the Temple,
COMMONLY CALLED
The Purification of S. Mary the Virgin.
(*FEBRUARY 2.*)



THE PARENTS' OFFERING.

"They brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord . . . and to offer a Sacrifice."—*S. Luke*, ii. 22, 24.

THERE is so much in this day's teaching connected with the Law of Moses, and so much likewise for us to learn by the application to ourselves of the history contained in the Gospel, that it will not be possible to include all that could be wished within the limits of this Reading. We will, therefore, leave the first-

named division of the subject, that is, the *legal* aspect of the day, as much as possible, and confine ourselves more especially to the practical teaching of the Festival. We will divide this under three heads, considering, *first*, the lessons of this day for parents; *secondly*, its teaching as regards *all* Christians; and *thirdly*, conclude with some slight notice of the ancient customs of the Feast, and with the practical application of its lessons to ourselves.

The Collect seems especially to belong to the second division of our subject, since it applies to all Christians, and the purity of heart needed by all. The Epistle refers to the Coming of Christ, as on this day, to His Temple in Jerusalem, as our Incarnate God, in great humility; and also to His future Advent, when "He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead." While the Gospel gives us the



whole detailed account of this day's first solemnities, and speaks more especially of that which we are about to consider, namely, the lesson of to-day for parents. And if it is one for all ranks, and for all classes of parents, more especially is it so for those whom Jesus has called to follow Him in the quiet lowly walks of life. To them in particular belongs the teaching of this day, and to them, in a special manner, the example of the Gospel speaks. There we find the Blessed Mother of our Lord, and S. Joseph, His reputed father, both giving thanks to God, both presenting the Holy Child, both offering a Sacrifice. "*They* brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, . . . and to offer a Sacrifice." And, "When the *parents* brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law." Is not this a striking pattern of *united* thanksgiving, and

united offerings for all parents to consider ? We do not read that the Blessed Virgin came *alone* to give thanks, and to present her Divine Child to the Lord, but her husband was there also. “*They* brought Him,” and came together to offer a Sacrifice. And, further, remember S. Joseph was by trade a carpenter, with his business to attend to, yet he found time to go up with Mary his wife into God’s Temple, to give thanks with her, and that they might together present the Child Jesus.

Would not Christian parents do well at such times as these to follow this holy example ? How often does a mother give thanks alone, and present her child for Holy Baptism alone, even sometimes leaving this latter to be done by friends only. What a pleasant and godly sight it would be, if we always saw the parents come together to God’s House at such seasons,

that both might praise God, and both together offer their child to the Lord. We do know such good examples, but they are not common. Besides, however, the portion of the parents' offering which we have considered, there is another portion especially to be noticed, namely, the offering of a Sacrifice.

Now you all know that it is customary at *Churchings*, after the service is concluded, for a small sum of money to be offered. Indeed, if you look to the end of the service, you will see that the Church gives a direction for this in the last rubric : "The woman that cometh to give her thanks must offer accustomed offerings." I am afraid, however, that in many cases people think that when they thus give their money, they are paying for the service, rather than offering something to God as an acknowledgment of His great mercies to them. In the Church

where I have most often seen this service, the Priest always takes the offering, and presents and lays it upon the Altar; and this helps any one the more to realise that the offering is one made to God, and that it is, as it were, a sacrifice unto Him.

But there is a further thought which here rises to the mind. There is something more than all this, which our Church would fain have all Christian mothers offer to God in their service of praise. There is a portion of the rubric at the end of the service we have not yet noticed. It is this: "And if there be a Communion, it is convenient that she receive the Holy Communion." As one has said,—“But besides the accustomed offering the woman is to make a yet better and greater offering, namely, an offering of herself, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice to God. For the rubric de-

clares that, *if there be a Communion, it is convenient that she receive the Holy Communion*, that being the most solemn way of praising God for Him by Whom she received the present and all other God's mercies towards her, and a means also to bind herself more strictly to spend those days in His service which, by this late deliverance, he hath added to her life."

But, alas! in practice, there is a sad falling off from the Church's counsel, and the great majority of those who come thus to return thanks to God, are wives and mothers who are living in constant absence from the means of grace, and are neither Church-goers nor communicants; and thanksgivings of this kind are usually fixed for times when the Holy Communion is not celebrated. But if the Lord's Table *was* spread, and the Altar *was* made

ready, where would be found amongst our cottagers, the mother who sought thus to consecrate her day of thanksgiving, by uniting her accustomed offerings, and the offering of herself, with that all-sufficient Sacrifice which sanctifies every offering of ours before God, even the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, once offered upon the Cross, and commemorated and partaken of in every faithful Communion ?

And now, what is this day's teaching for *all* Christians ? It is still a lesson of sacrifice and offerings. For we pray in the Collect, that as Christ was presented in the Temple this day unto the Father, so we may be presented unto God with pure and clean hearts by the same Jesus Christ our Lord ; that is, through His merits, by union with Him, and participation in His Divine nature, Who, as on this day, was presented to God "in substance of our flesh."

This day's teaching, then, to all Christians, is especially a lesson of *Purity*, that Divine grace which, implanted in our hearts, leads to a life of purity both of soul and body. For as it was in Body as well as in Spirit that our Saviour Christ was presented, as on this day, in the Temple, as the Spotless Lamb of God, so, if we would be presented faultless before the Father, it must be by Jesus Christ, both in holiness of flesh and spirit. These bodies, the temples of the Holy Ghost, must be kept undefiled and pure, and David's prayer must be ours to the end of our lives, "Make me a *clean heart*, O God." Thus, if we stand prepared and waiting, we need not fear, even though the Lord Whom we seek should suddenly come to this frail temple of our flesh, and call us quickly into His Presence.

But, if we would have it so, we must not

shrink from the process of our purification while we are below, even that constant increase of faith and discipline which will make us to be found, through Jesus Christ, an offering to the Lord in righteousness. But what is this process,—what is the necessary means for our purification from sin whilst we are here on earth? First, there must be sincere sorrow for all past sin, followed by humble confession of it before God, with a hearty determination to forsake it. And then there must be an earnest desire and effort to make all the amends in our power for the past, coupled with a firm trust in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins. And there must follow a life-long conflict with sin, a life-long use of the means of grace, a life-long submission to the Hand of the loving Saviour, Who sits over us, as a Refiner and Purifier, until He sees in our souls the reflected

image of His Own Purity. Thus shall we be prepared for His great Appearing, for we shall stand alike through His Merits and in His Likeness, and “ then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord.”

And now, before concluding, there are one or two points connected with this day's solemnities it will be well to notice. You know that when our Blessed Lord was presented in the Temple, and when He was laid as a Little Child in the arms of the aged Simeon, that this Saint of God first uttered those words which are appointed to be used every evening in our Church service, called the *Nunc Dimittis*. How striking are they when any little one is presented at the font at the appointed time in that service! For then, no sooner are the holy words uttered, and the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Baptism fulfilled, than we hear the song of Simeon rising

with joy and almost startling significance on the ear, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word ; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

I daresay many of you have heard from childhood, the term *Candlemas* applied to this day. Did you ever think what it meant ? Do you not remember that, in Simeon's song, he speaks of our Lord as "A Light to lighten the Gentiles ?" And so, in old time, in remembrance of this, our Churches used, on this Feast of the Purification, to be brightly lighted with candles, in honour of our Lord's Title. And as the great service of the day was Holy Communion, then called the Mass, the two words were joined together, and so we have the term *Candlemas Day* ; just as at Christmas, the Name of our Lord and the old word for the Holy Communion

were joined together, and so we have Christmas Day.

And now it remains for each one of us to see how we can indeed make this a true Holy Day unto the Lord. Some still have the opportunity of making Devout Communion the chief Service of the Festival, as, in many churches now, all these Holy-days are especially sanctified to God by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. If it be so in the place where you live, O see that you avail yourself of the opportunity given you, if it be possible ; that, as these days come round, you may indeed honour Jesus as " The Light which lighteneth every man," and, having trimmed your own lamps by a devout preparation of heart, may be replenished with a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and thus, with your lights afresh kindled at God's holy Altar, may be enabled by His grace so to let them

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shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Heavenly Father. But *wherever* our lot is cast, we can still honour Jesus, and follow the example of His Sacred Purity. Everywhere, wherever we are, we can keep the Feast of the Purification, by endeavouring anew to forsake sin, and by so striving in the strength of Jesus, that at last we may be by Him presented faultless unto the Father, "before the Presence of His Glory, with exceeding joy."

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling. To the Only Wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."



S. Matthias's Day.

(FEBRUARY 24.)



THE LOST PLACE.

"His bishoprick let another take."

The Acts i. 20.

THIS is I think a most solemn Festival. There is something almost awful in its joy. For, while we admire the Grace of God, as seen in His servant S. Matthias, we are reminded at the same time of him whose place S. Matthias took, and are filled with trembling lest we too, should in any sense, share the guilt of Judas, and provoke our God to say of us, as.

He did of him, "His bishoprick (that is, his office or charge) let another take." For let us notice here, it was not merely that Judas by his sin, ceased to be of the number of the Apostles, and that S. Matthias because of his holiness, was chosen to be of their company. Not so. But Judas actually forfeited his appointed place and reward, and S. Matthias actually stepped by God's appointment, into the place of Judas. And herein lies the special awfulness of this Feast, because it brings before us the truth, that for each of us, there is an office, a charge prepared by God, even in this world, good works *prepared* for us to walk in : and yet, that if we are unfaithful, we may, at any moment be deprived of our charge, of our office, of all opportunity for working those good works God has prepared for us, and so finally lose not only our place in the Kingdom

of Heaven here, but also that place, even that Home above, which "God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Neither is this all. We must not imagine that if we fail, our place will be empty, the good works we should have done, left undone, the Crown prepared for us, hanging useless in the Treasure-house of Heaven. O no! God's Work must be done, His House must be filled, the number of His Elect must be accomplished. The question for us is, whether *we* keep our place assigned, whether *we* do our appointed work, and win our promised crown, or whether through unfaithfulness, we lose our place, our opportunity of work, our crown prepared, and God appoints another *in our stead*, to fulfil all His Will. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, *that no*

man take thy crown." But before speaking further of the mere personal teaching of the day, let us consider the special lesson of this Feast for us, as members of the Church of Christ, wherever that Church is planted. The duty pointed out to us, is one I am afraid we have much neglected, one of the good works prepared for us, but which we have not taken up as we ought. I mean the duty of prayer that God would alway preserve His Church from false Apostles, and vouchsafe that it may ever be ordered and guided by faithful and true Pastors. O! what might not now have been the glory of the Church of God, if her children had ever been faithful in prayer for her, in this particular, using from their hearts, such of her petitions as relate to this special subject, as does the Collect for this Day of S. Matthias. How many desolate parishes might now have

been as the Garden of the Lord, what dishonour to God might have been averted, how many sad falls from the Faith, how many grievous desertions might have been prevented, had the members of Christ's Church cried more earnestly to Him, that He would ever grant to her faithful and true Pastors ! Alas, we are generally only too ready to blame the Church, and to criticise her Pastors ; we should do far better, if we spoke of their defects less, and prayed about them more.

Also, perchance we do not sufficiently realise, the extreme difficulty of faithfulness and well-doing, in whatever position we may be placed.

Our Church recognises this truth, for in her Daily Evening Prayer for both Clergy and People, She begins her petition for them in these striking words :—" Almighty and Ever-

lasting God, Who alone workest great marvels, Send down upon our Bishops and Curates, and all Congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of Thy Grace." And is not this thought one, the truth of which, our own hearts confirm.

Do we not all know that in every office with which we are charged, and in all our Christian course it is by Grace alone that we stand ; and that we are so surrounded by temptations, so encompassed by difficulties, within and without, that if we are, by God's Grace, kept faithful to the end, it will only be another instance of the wonderful power of the Grace of God, another great marvel of His Goodness ?

And if this is so, with regard to all Christians, how much more is it so in respect of the Ministers of the Gospel,—those who are charged with the ordering and the guiding of

all things concerning the Church of God, and the Flock of Christ?

They have the treasures of God's Grace committed to them, for others, and they have special strength given them in order to fulfil their charge, but they are men still, they have this treasure in "earthen vessels," they are encompassed with infirmity; and fightings without, and fears within, may well often tempt them to lose heart.

How needful then is it, that we should strive to strengthen them with our prayers, and that we should follow the direction of our Church, when she bids us pray for her good estate, that she may ever be ordered and guided by faithful and true Pastors, and that both Pastors and People, may be renewed and refreshed by the Dew of God's Blessing, that they may live so as truly to please Him.

To please God ! Did you ever think what these words really mean ? To please God. Can we then delight our God by well-doing ; can we give Him pleasure ? O thought of deep joy, it is even so.

And, as when we please an earthly friend, or master, or parent, we usually have some token from them of their pleasure, so will it be with us, if we delight in doing God's Will. He will not leave us without some token for good, He will be truly pleased with us, and there will come to us at least some brightness even here, from the Light of our Heavenly Father's Countenance.

In the Epistle for the Day, we have the account of the choice of S. Matthias to fill the vacant place of Judas, from which he by transgression fell. And the token of God's approval vouchsafed to S. Matthias, when after earnest

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prayer that God would guide them, the Apostles "gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the Eleven Apostles."

S. Matthias is supposed to have been one of the Seventy, whom our Lord sent before Him "two and two into every city and place whither He Himself would come." And if it were so, it makes the passage chosen for the Gospel of this Festival, all the more strikingly appropriate, since these words of our Lord were uttered, on the return of the Seventy from their Mission, when they came to Him with joy, because of the success granted to them in their Ministry. Then it was that He charged them not to rejoice so much in the miraculous powers He had vouchsafed to them, as in the fact that they were His, and that their names were written in Heaven.



And then comes that one only instance of our Blessed Lord rejoicing. Sorrow was generally, as we know, the cup He drank for our sakes.

But S. Luke relates that, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit." And what was the reason of this unusual movement of Joy within the Mind of our Blessed Lord? Was it not that He gave thanks unto the Father, that it had pleased Him to work His Holy Will by those who were little in the world's esteem, and to endue with much Grace and Power, those who were of a simple and child-like spirit. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

The Gospel for to-day seems as it were a very hand-book for the Ministers of the Gospel, and in their degree, for all Christians. We

have there, First, the temper of mind all should possess, namely, a child-like spirit. Secondly, it is revealed to us, that though we may be weak in power, and simple as little children, yet our Lord is *all*-powerful to aid. "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." We are there taught how we can only have the Knowledge of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him." And then as if our Blessed Saviour's Heart of Love had kindled with compassion at the thought of the troubles and sorrows of His struggling Church, and the heavy burdens which would, He well knew, weigh down many a weary soul, He breaks forth in those *Comfortable Words*, which have been, and will be, the Consolation of all ages, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Then follows the further direction, and the further assurance, "Take My Yoke upon you and learn of Me." "My Yoke is easy, and My Burden is light."

And so ends the Holy Gospel, containing in its short compass, a world of Heavenly teaching and consolation. Of the Life of S. Matthias after the events recorded in the Epistle for the Day, very little is known, and the manner of his death is very uncertain. He continued in Jerusalem, until after the Day of Pentecost, and is thought to have spent the first fruits of his Ministry, in Judea, with great success. It is very probable that afterwards he travelled eastward to Cappadocia, where it is related, he was by the barbarous people, treated with great "rudeness and inhumanity," and obtained the Crown of

Martyrdom. It is reported by some that he was first stoned, and then beheaded ; by others, that he was crucified, "and that as Judas was hanged upon a tree, so S. Matthias suffered upon a cross."

S. Matthias has left no writings behind him, but he is recorded by S. Clement of Alexandria, to have been remarkable as leading a severe life, and one of constant mortification of the flesh, in order the better to subdue its irregular appetites. Many Saints have found that a life of strict self-denial, aided them in guarding the Grace given to them, and in increasing its power. S. Matthias had an awful destiny to fulfil. To stand in the place of one who had fallen from Grace given, and to endeavour himself to be faithful, where Judas had failed. We may readily then suppose, that it would be by great strictness, and with fear and trembling

that he would endeavour to do his Lord's Will, and work out his own Salvation.

And now, how shall we sum up the Lessons of this day, so suggestive in its teaching to every one of us? We can do so but very briefly.

First let us remember the awful warning of the fall of Judas, and gather from the consideration of it, how great is the necessity for earnest, loving, and persevering prayer for the Church of God,—especially for those set over her in the Lord. Then let us gather from this warning, how for each one of us there is a place, an office, a work prepared in the Church of God, and that our whole life must be spent in our endeavour to fill our place, to be faithful in our office, to do our work prepared, lest by our unfaithfulness, we lose all these opportunities, and cause them to be given to others, forfeiting with

them likewise the reward of faithful service, which might have been ours. Lastly let us strive to realise more than we do, the extreme difficulty of faithfulness, the great peril we are ever in, of falling from Grace given, and let this rouse us to greater watchfulness, and strictness of life, that so when our Lord comes to us, it may not be to remove us in wrath, from our office, our place, and our work, but to call us into His Presence with exceeding joy, even to that House which He has gone to make ready for us, that we may inherit the Kingdom prepared for His faithful servants, even from the foundation of the world. Amen.



The Annunciation of the Blessed
Virgin Mary.

(MARCH 25.)



THE MINISTRY OF GABRIEL.

“Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee ;
blessed art thou among women.”

S. Luke i. 28.

THE Festival we celebrate to-day, is one of such deep mystery, that we should approach it with special reverence, and pray God that He would indeed grant, that the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts may be acceptable in His sight. It is called in the Prayer Book by three various

names, "The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary," "The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin," and "The Annunciation of our Lady." These titles draw our thoughts to her, whom the Church has ever delighted reverently to honour, and the Collect teaches us by implication, why it is that we so honour her; namely, because she was chosen of God, to be the Virgin Mother of our Lord. So in the prayer of the Collect, we lose sight of her by name, in order that we may be more entirely absorbed in the great Mystery of which she was the instrument, I mean the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed the main point of the Collect, is the thought of the message concerning this mystery, which the angel brought from God to "us men," as on this Festival. And afterwards we pray, that we may not stop at this knowledge, but

may through faith in, and close following of our Blessed Lord in His Cross and Passion, be made partakers of the glory of His Resurrection.

The portion of Scripture chosen for the Epistle, and going before the Gospel as a prophetic herald, shows still further the Divine nature of that Holy Child which should be born, and the awful dignity of her, who was to bear Him. Here we see Him described, not only as the Son of God, (as in the Collect), but, as God Himself. His Name being revealed to us, as Immanuel, "*God with us.*" In the Gospel, we have the account, of how this prophecy was fulfilled, more than 700 years after it was uttered by the Prophet Isaiah.

The expression in the Collect concerning the message of the angel gives the key to the title of our reading. We there find that the im-

mediate announcement of our Blessed Lord coming in the flesh, was not made by any holy man inspired by God, but by an angel sent from Heaven. The Church seems especially to bring this fact before us, as if it were well to remind her children, of those holy beings, whose ministry of love we are so apt to forget, though every baptized Christian, is an object of their loving care.

We find on referring to the Gospel, what was the name of the Heavenly Messenger, charged with the Annunciation of to-day. "In the sixth month the Angel *Gabriel* was sent from God." Only four times in Holy Scripture is this angel spoken of by name, and he seems ever to have been sent, not only on messages of comfort, but in order to unfold from time to time, deep mysteries to the children of men. About 550 years before we find his name mentioned in



St. Luke's Gospel, he was sent to comfort the Prophet Daniel, *and to make him understand the vision* by which he was perplexed. Some 30 years later we read a second time of the same prophet being in great trouble, and in earnest supplication before God; when, whilst he was speaking and praying, *Gabriel*, having been caused to fly swiftly, again visited him, touching him about the hour of the evening oblation, and saying, "O Daniel, I am now come forth, to give thee skill and *understanding*." And then follows his announcement to the prophet of the coming Messiah. The next mention we have of the Angel Gabriel, is when, at the time of prayer, there appeared unto the Priest Zacharias, "An Angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the Altar of incense." And at his glorious presence, in this, as in the other instances of his appearing, there seems to have



been a holy fear inspired in each one to whom he came. When he came to Daniel, he was afraid and fell upon his face; when to Zacharias, "he was troubled and fear fell upon him," and, as we all know, at his last appearing, as on this day, when Mary "saw him, she was troubled at his saying." Gabriel was, as we have seen, the great messenger concerning the Messiah. In the case of Daniel; in the case of Zacharias, when he came to announce to him the birth of his son, who was to be the forerunner of Jesus; and in the case of the Annunciation of to-day, when he came to tell of the birth of Jesus Christ Himself. And notice the dignity and power with which he exercised his ministry. When Zacharias doubted of his words, the only answer he gave to him, was, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee . . . and behold thou shalt

be dumb, and not able to speak . . . because thou believest not my words." How mighty and terrible are the angels of the Lord. "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire!"

And now having thus far traced out in general the special ministry of Gabriel, let us consider him in particular on this Holy-Day as bearing to earth the glad tidings of Redemption, whereby we do know "The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ by the message of an angel." Never before had messenger been so honoured, never had Gabriel been charged with such a ministry as this. When the corner-stone of the earth was laid at the first, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But when the Lord as on this day says, "Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, Elect, Precious," there seems as it

were, a deep "silence in Heaven," and we picture the adoring company on high, gazing in perfect stillness of intense adoration on these mysteries of redeeming love, "which things the angels desire to look into." Through the calm quietude of Mary's home at Nazareth, may be at the hour of prayer, the angel comes, and startles her with the amazing words of the text. "Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." Then we read of her fear, and of his reassurance, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God." Further we follow the Heavenly converse, and listen to the Promise of the Birth of JESUS, the Saviour, her Son, and the Son of the Highest, even the Son of God. Then, as if to encourage her faith, he tells her of the wonders already wrought for her cousin Elizabeth, closing this communication of deep



mystery by the words, "For with God nothing is impossible." And Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word;" then "the angel departed from her."

We cannot dwell on this part of our Reading ; we can but adore in silent wonder. We have known the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ by the message of an angel ; and now, before us lies the path of the Cross and of suffering, if we would hope for its glorious fruits in a risen life with Jesus. "We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts, that, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, *so by His Cross and Passion* we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection." Was it not so with the Blessed Mary ? How soon her trials began after the Annunciation was accomplished ! Her words,

so perfect in their submission, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word," were followed immediately by the departure of the angel, and by an isolation unspeakable, saving that, in very truth, the Lord was with her. In that hour, who could sympathise with her heart and mind, but God only,—who could sustain her in her awful destiny of mingled joy and sorrow, but God alone ? The next thing we read of her, is the account of her visit to St. Elizabeth, entailing as it did a weary journey of not less than eighty miles. But where was she to go, save to her ? "To whom could she so safely tell her marvellous secret ? Who could better give her comfort and counsel . . . than the holy priest Zacharias, and Elizabeth ? for they had also received an errand from Heaven. . . . And Mary did not hesitate ; she rose up and went with haste on her journey.

. . . From Nazareth . . . to Hebron" the road lay "by mountain and by pass. . . . She was young and helpless . . ." but "stage by stage she travels through towns and cities . . . till at length Hebron rises to her view." Then, in further tracing the trials of the Blessed Virgin, our mind goes forward to the journey to Bethlehem, where, immediately before the Birth of Jesus, there was no place found for her even "in the inn;" but her Firstborn Son must be brought forth in a stable, and cradled in a manger. Then follows the first most precious Blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus, in the rite of Circumcision, in which suffering of her Divine Son, how must not His Mother have shared! Then the flight into Egypt; her sorrow when, in returning from Jerusalem, she sought but found Him not; her constant anxieties for Him during His Ministry, even for Him her Beloved

Son, increasing in awful intensity towards its close, until on Calvary she "stood by the Cross of Jesus." Verily the sword had pierced her! What must *His* mother have suffered, of Whom it was said, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief!" Just, however, in proportion as she had participated in His Cross and Passion, was the joy to her of His glorious Easter. And so it will ever be with us. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." O Lord, give us grace to suffer according to Thy Will. "Conform Thy servants . . . to the Likeness of Thy Passion. Give us grace, O Eternal Father, that we strive to keep the way of the Holy Cross, and carry in our hearts the Image of Jesus crucified."

And now, what shall we say in conclusion? How shall the fruits of our knowledge of the

Incarnation appear in our lives ? How shall we endeavour to shape our conduct, so as to correspond with our prayers. Shall it not be by a readiness ever to do and to suffer according to the Will of God ? Shall we not each strive for the spirit of those holy words of the Blessed Virgin, “ Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.” Not my will, Lord, but Thine be done. Thou knowest what is before me,—what portion of Thy Cross and Passion Thou dost will me to partake of. I know not, Lord, what the voice of my heart may imply in the treasure-house of Thy Wisdom and Love ; I know not what the answer to my prayers may be, nor how Thou mayest take me at my word. Nevertheless, I cast myself into the arms of Thy mercy,—“ Behold *me*, O Lord ; be it unto *me* according to Thy word.” Amen.

S. Mark's Day.

(APRIL 25.)



STEDFASTNESS.

“Abide in me.”—*St. John* xv. 4.

IT is exactly a month to-day, since we kept in memory the great Festival of the Annunciation, and learnt what our path in this life must be if we hope to attain to the Life of Glory.

To-day we are brought as it were, a step further in the same teaching, and the necessity not only of *beginning* well, but of persevering *stedfastness* in the faith, is brought before us. So we see in the Collect after the commemora-

tion of St. Mark, the Church puts this prayer into our mouths, "Give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be *established* in the truth of Thy Holy Gospel."

And here we must notice the great difference between the two tempers of mind brought to our thoughts to-day, the consideration of which may prevent mistakes. We are so often exhorted in the Gospel, to be as little children, and to be childlike, that at first sight the prayer of the Collect seems almost to startle us when we ask, "Give us grace, that, being not like children." We must remember, however, that it is not against being childlike in spirit that the Collect prays, but, against *childishness*, against changeableness, against frivolity and waywardness, that we may the rather be *established* in the Truth.

Further, to-day is also brought before us, not only the duty of steadfastness, but of the proof which we should all expect, as the result of perseverance, I mean *growth*. This is plainly put before us in the Epistle. "That we henceforth be no more children . . . but . . . may *grow* up into Him in all things." And again, "And He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets . . . for the *perfecting* of the Saints . . . till we all come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the Fulness of Christ."

This is a great truth, and one we should often meditate upon. We sometimes hear people speak as if there was no need to press forward in holiness, as if it was sufficient to lay the foundation of our spiritual life by an act of faith in Christ Jesus, and then to do nothing more, either supposing that to be enough, or imagining that the Foundation Stone being laid, the rest

of the building should spring up as a matter of course. Yet, is it so in any other case we can name? Do your children grow and thrive simply because they are born? Do they not need food and constant care, for many a long year, before they are full grown men and women? Does the fruit of the land come to perfection, without a regular process of culture, suited to the nature of each produce? Does a builder find that a house rises from the ground without pain and labour, simply because the corner stone has been duly laid? Not so. You all well know that course after course of masonry needs to be carefully raised, scaffolding needs to be erected, in order that the higher portions may be reached, and many a day's labour must be gone through, and often great danger incurred, before the roof is completed, and the highest point gained. And, as of the builder,

so we may say of the gardener or woodman ; simply planting a fruit tree, will not ensure good fruit, and the mere sowing of a good seed, will not ensure the perfection of the plant or flower.

So, it is not sufficient for us that we have been baptized into Christ ; it is not enough to say, " I believe in Jesus," unless those who so speak mean that they have a good hope that they are going on unto perfection, and that their faith is leading them to work out their own salvation, with fear and trembling.

Now as the Collect and Epistle speak to us of stedfastness and growth in grace, the Gospel teaches us how we are to be stedfast, and the Source of our growth. Our Blessed Lord here speaks of Himself as the True Vine, and of His people as the branches of the Vine. He shows that as no branch can live and bear fruit, except it be in union with the vine, so no Chris-

tian can be one of Christ's true disciples, or be fruit-bearing, except he be united to Him and remain stedfast in that union. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."

Further He shows to us the Source of our growth and fruit-bearing, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Here then we come to our special thought for to-day; a thought not connected with our New Birth in Jesus Christ, so much as with stedfastly *abiding* in Him. And this must be taken to imply, not a mere resting in a state of salvation, so to speak, but a constant progress, not only in holiness, but in an ever wider and firmer grasp of the whole Mystery of the Faith and Doctrine of Jesus, and of those things which He has revealed to His Saints. So we

read to-day how God has instructed His Holy Church by the Heavenly Doctrine of His Evangelist, S. Mark, and we shall naturally at once think of the Gospel which he wrote, and which bears his name. But let us try if we can to discover what is the peculiar light which shines upon the Church through his Doctrine, which the Collect in so marked a manner describes as "*Heavenly*."

First we find from the historian Eusebius, that S. Mark's ministry was one, not only of great success, so that multitudes both of men and women were converted to the faith, but one also of great strictness, leading his converts to live very close to God, by lives of heavenly devotion, and self-denial. Further the *Gospel* of S. Mark especially sets forth the Kingly and Royal character of our Blessed Lord. That Royalty which, even as yet, is not wholly



revealed to us. For, though now He hath "ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father," all His enemies are not yet put under His Feet; the Church on earth is still crying "*Thy Kingdom come,*" and beseeching our God, that He would shortly accomplish the number of His elect, and *hasten His Kingdom*; and the Saints who are waiting for their perfect consummation and bliss, are crying, "How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge." Yea, even "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," waiting for the full redemption of the world, at the "appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," when the last enemy, even death, shall be destroyed, and He "shall change our vile bodies, so that they may be fashioned like unto His Glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things

read to-day how God has instructed His Holy Church by the Heavenly Doctrine of His Evangelist, S. Mark, and we shall naturally once think of the Gospel which he wrote, and which bears his name. But let us try if we can to discover what is the peculiar light which shines upon the Church through his Doctrine, which the Collect in so marked a manner describes as "*Heavenly.*"

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unto Himself." And then shall the full Revelation of the Glory of the Lord begin to shine upon His faithful servants, gathering Brightness and Glory unspeakable, in the eyes of His redeemed ones, throughout the endless ages of Eternity. Then shall He go forth no more "Conquering and to conquer," but as "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords," in the fulness of His Power, and Heaven shall resound with the mighty thunder-roll of Praise, "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

But though the doctrine of the kingly power of Christ Jesus our Lord, is most comforting to us, *if we be found* in His holy ways ; yet is it a most affrighting thought for those whose hearts are not wholly right with Him, or who are not working stedfastly in His Cause. "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth," saith the



Lord. This is a thought we cannot too often meditate upon. It is a very solemn one, for we must work for Christ in His Own way, and according to His will, or we shall be doing more harm than good, and following our self-will rather than the Will of God.

Now one of the ways in which we can especially do our Lord's Will, and strive for the union of His Body, the Church, is by continuing "stedfast in the Faith," not being "like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine," but being "established in the Truth of the Holy Gospel." And being established in the Truth of the Holy Gospel, is not merely believing in Jesus Christ, as the term is usually understood ; it is the receiving, and endeavouring stedfastly to live in the power of the whole Truth of God ; not merely believing a small portion of the Truth, but being obedient to *the Faith* ; to the Faith,

that is, which embraces the whole Counsel of God, and which was "once delivered to the Saints." This is the Faith which includes all the ordinances of the Church of Christ, especially the two great Sacraments. This is the Faith which embraces the doctrines which lead to the highest saintliness; this is the Faith, which goes on unto perfection, in a word, this is the Heavenly Doctrine by which S. Mark instructed and instructs the Church of God. Moreover this is the Faith in which he was stedfast even unto the end.

We know but few particulars of the history of S. Mark. He was born of Jewish parents, originally descended from the tribe of Levi, and was probably converted by the teaching of S. Peter, whose constant companion he was in all his journeys, and for whom he wrote and probably interpreted, when he was labouring amongst

strange people and languages. He was sent by S. Peter to Egypt, fixing his residence chiefly at Alexandria, where he is supposed to have died a Martyr's death in the reign of the Emperor Nero, though by what means he obtained his crown, is not certain. And now what concluding lesson, shall we draw from our Reading to-day? Shall it not be this, that we must earnestly strive to attain to and practice the *whole* Truth of God. That Truth which is made up of both Doctrine, and Practice. Not only of Doctrine, and not only of Practice, but of *Doctrine and Practice*; and that, as it is revealed to us in the Word of God, and as taught by His Church. It will not do for us to *choose* what we will believe, we must receive all that the Spirit of God has revealed to us, and seek by His grace to be *established* in the Truth of His Holy Gospel, steadfastly abiding in Him,

and growing in Grace, that our lives may more and more approach that pattern given to us in S. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians 4th chapter 8th and 9th verses. "Finally Brethren, *whatsoever things are true*, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and heard *do*: and the God of Peace shall be with you." Amen.



SS. Philip and James' Day.

MAY 1.



FAITH, TWOFOLD.

“He that believeth in Me, the works that I do shall he do also.”—*S. John* xiv. 12.

THE Collect for this Festival is a very remarkable one, when we look closely into it. It is made up, as it were, of the two great characteristics of the Faith, namely, confidence in Jesus Christ, and that which must spring from such trust, if it be genuine, even a diligent following in the Footsteps of the Lord and His Saints, along the path of ever-increasing holiness, which at length will most assuredly

lead the faithful soul, to the full revelation of that "Gift of God," which is "Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Collect for the day gives us more than once a warning by implication. It shows us how very careful we should be not to use expressions without understanding them, and how earnestly we should seek the attainment of that knowledge which, if perfected, is in itself Everlasting Life, namely, the knowledge of God.

But, how can we know Him? He is a Spirit, Who cannot be seen by us, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto." How can we know Him then? We know Him by that which He hath *done*, by the marvellous works which from the foundation of the world He hath from time to time showed unto us.

Above all, we know Him in the great work

of our redemption, which He wrought out for us, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom we read in this day's Gospel as declaring, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." Well might the victorious saints above, whom S. John heard, exclaim in a very wonder of praise, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints!" Our Blessed Lord, God manifest in the Flesh, is the Way, or means whereby we come to, and know the Father. As He Himself hath said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." "If ye had known Me, ye would have known My Father also."

He is the Way, the Way to the Father, for it is by His Spirit we are roused to a sense of our need, if we have strayed from, and been recalled to the Grace of Holy Baptism.

It is for His sake that the Father receives and pardons the returning penitent. He it is, Who, by His Spirit, renews, sanctifies, and teaches us, for He is the Truth, yes, the Truth of God; and He is our Food and Sustenance on the way of our pilgrimage, for He is alone our Life.

But lest all this should be as to them of old, lest we should hear the truth declared, and not realise its depth and awfulness, in its personal application to ourselves. Lest we listen to it, as "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice," and hear the words of Heavenly teaching, but do them not, the Church goes on to explain her meaning, and to show that what she would have us understand is this, that we must so believe in Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that through the energy of this knowledge, and ever-increasing participation in His Divine Nature, we may stedfastly go on unto

perfection in the steps of His Saints, and especially of those whom we this day celebrate, that so we may in very truth be found on the pathway of sanctity which they trod, even that Path of the Just which is as "the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the Perfect Day."

The two Saints, on whose history the Church this day bids us meditate, are S. Philip and S. James. And we are, as it were, exhorted especially to follow their stedfastness. Now in order to do this, we must strive to attain to some knowledge of them, and endeavour to realise as much as possible all we can gather concerning them. S. Philip was born in Bethsaida in Galilee, and was probably, like S. Andrew, a fisherman, this being the general trade of that place. He was early called to be one of Jesus' Disciples, and readily complied

with the command of the Lord, saying, "Follow Me." He too, like S. Andrew, was an early Missionary in the Saviour's cause, for we find him shortly after his own call, urging Nathaniel also to come to Jesus.

In the Gospel for to-day, we have an account of a conversation between our Lord and S. Philip, which though showing his, as yet, imperfect knowledge of the Nature of our Lord, as The Incarnate God, yet most strikingly exhibits likewise, his singleness of purpose, and the turning of his whole soul to want God. "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." "*It sufficeth us!*" Are we not reminded of the words of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee?"—and of those of the Saint who wrote, "Thou, O my God, art my Light and my

Hope; Thou art my Strength my Praise and my Glory, O my God. Thou art my Wisdom my Beauty, and all my Sweetness, O my God." Therefore, O Lord, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us!"

Besides what we can gather of S. Philip in the Bible, we have several notices of him in the histories of the Saints. It is supposed that he laboured in upper Asia, where he was very earnest and zealous in his ministry making many converts to the Faith. Towards the close of his life, we are told he came to Hierapolis, a rich and populous city in Phrygia, where the people were idolators. Here S. Philip having met with great success in his labours, provoked thereby the opposition of the heathen magistrates, and it was in this place he is supposed to have suffered martyrdom, though by what death is not certainly known.

And have we anything of S. Philip's faith and love? Are we striving fearlessly, earnestly, and stedfastly to do God's work as S. Philip did? Are we learning more and more as S. Philip learnt, of the great Love of God in the Revelation of Jesus Christ? Can we take up the words of S. Paul and make them our own, "God Who commanded the Light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ?" "For in Him dwelleth all the Fulness of the God-head Bodily."

Thus having considered, very briefly, the few points which seem to stand out specially in S. Philip's history, let us turn to that of S. James.

There is no mention in Holy Scripture of the place of his birth, but he is styled therein,

“James, the Lord’s brother,” which, may be, only signifies in the language of the Jews, a relation; but which is however by many supposed to mean that S. James was the son of Joseph, before he was the husband of the Blessed Virgin. He is called, S. James the Less, either from the smallness of his stature, or from his youth, when compared with the other S. James, of whom we shall hear presently. He has besides, the title of S. James the Just, by which he has ever been known, on account of the great holiness and virtue of his life.

He was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and there governed the Church many years. Yet in spite of his great dignity, both as regards his office and his near relationship to our Lord, we find him in the first chapter of his Epistle, simply calling himself, “A Servant of God, and

of the Lord Jesus Christ." The historian Eusebius relates much of the great strictness and self-denial of S. James' life, which excited the admiration not only of the Christians, but of the Jews also. Nevertheless, amongst them were those who were determined to accomplish his death, and at the time of the Passover, they endeavoured to induce him to dissuade the people from believing in our Blessed Lord; and in order that he might do this more effectually before the concourse of persons gathered together in Jerusalem at this season, they took him up to a pinnacle of the Temple, and there endeavoured to entangle him, saying, "Tell us, O just man, what we are to believe concerning Jesus Christ, Who was crucified?" Then "He answered with a loud voice, Why do ye enquire of Jesus, the Son of Man? He sits in Heaven, on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and

will come again in the clouds of Heaven." Upon which the people glorified the Blessed Jesus, and proclaimed Hosanna to the Son of David. Then the Scribes and Pharisees seeing that thus they were but advancing that Cause which they had determined to destroy, cried out that *Justus* was himself seduced, and threw him down from the place where he stood. Yet being only bruised, not killed, by the fall, he recovered sufficiently to get upon his knees, and pray for them who thus cruelly used him, and as he was thus praying for them, they loaded him with stones, till one with a fuller's club, put an end to his sufferings and the Saint rested from his labours, an old man, and full of years, being as is supposed in his ninety-sixth year when he suffered Martyrdom.

Josephus, the historian, traces the downfall of the nation of the Jews to this murder of S.

James, and reckons that it was this, which more immediately aroused the wrath of God, and hastened the destruction of the chosen people.

It was S. James the Just, who, as we have before noticed, wrote the Epistle bearing his name, from which the Epistle for the day is taken, and in it the lesson of our text is powerfully and strikingly enforced. We learn there, what we have been striving to draw from the Collect, that "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone," and that if we would seek Everlasting Joys, we must stedfastly walk in that path of Holiness, which alone leadeth to Life Eternal.

What lesson then in brief can we gather from this reading. First, we learn that as we only know God through the marvels of Creation, and in the wonders of Redemption, since we

can only know and love Him through the knowledge of what He has *done*, through His *acts*, through His great and wonderful works. So we are only known of Him in a saving sense, according to our works, and our love to Him can only be shown forth by acts of love. Our Lord, in the text taken out of to-day's Gospel, gives us no other test, in the remarkable words, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do, shall he do also."

And so we see Who it is the Saints imitate, and how we must follow them even as they followed Christ. He indeed is the Way, but He is the Way in *Holiness*. He indeed is the Truth, but He is the Truth in its *Fulness*, He indeed is the Life, but He is the Life only of those who have reckoned themselves "dead indeed unto sin," for such alone are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And so

we find we are brought back to the lesson of our Baptism ; for what is all this but an explanation of our Christian Profession, " Which is to follow the Example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him ? " What is it but another call to the reception of the whole Faith in its twofold character of Faith and Works ?

For, as we have seen, the Faith consists not only of Faith, or of Works alone, but of Faith and Works, of trust and deeds of love. " For as the body without the spirit is dead, so Faith without Works, is dead also."

Wherefore let us not be slothful, " But followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the Promises."



S. Barnabas the Apostle.

(JUNE 11.)



G I F T S.

“For he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost,
and of Faith.”—*The Acts* xi. 24.

IT is very necessary that we should, as the Saints' Days come round, endeavour to carry away from each some definite lesson, which we must strive to bring into the ordinary days' work and business of life. The Church services and the special teaching of her Holy Days, should be alike our spiritual resting places, our refreshment, our means of grace and

strength, that we may from time to time go forward with renewed energy in our Christian course. But, in order that it may be so in the best and most lasting sense, we must try at least to gain one distinct lesson, as the Festivals and Services come round. We shall not do much good by having only vague impressions of Holy Teaching, but we must get hold of our lesson as clearly as may be, in order to make it practical.

We will to-day meditate on the subject of God's Gifts to us, since the Collect seems especially to point us to this, and consider as we go on, His natural or personal gifts to us,—His gifts connected with our outward circumstances, and lastly, His Higher Gifts of Grace. But in order that we may have before us through all, the chief object of this Festival, namely, the bringing before us the example of S. Barnabas,



and the Commemoration of the Grace of God, as seen in his life, we will first consider a few points concerning him.

In the Collect we find that S. Barnabas was endued with "singular Gifts of the Holy Ghost." It is of him we are told in the text, that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." We also find in the Acts, that though his original name was Joses, yet the Apostles surnamed him Barnabas, ("which is being interpreted) The Son of Consolation." Moreover he was especially called to the Apostleship, by the Holy Ghost Himself, in the words, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

We read also of his external gifts of property, &c., in the words wherein we are told, that he "Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet." He

was also a scholar, for he had been brought up with Saul, at the feet of that great Doctor of the Law, Gamaliel; and was moreover supposed to have been highly gifted in person, so that when at Lystra, as related in the *Acts* xiv. 12, he was compared by the people to their sovereign deity, Jupiter. As regards his birth, he was a native of the rich and beautiful Island of Cyprus, where his Jewish ancestors had probably fled in troublous times. His parents are described as rich and pious, sending him up to Jerusalem, as we have seen, to be instructed in the Law.

Having traced out all this, we shall be the better able to enter into the spirit of the Collect, and into the teaching of this day's reading.

Not many have been gifted in such a variety of ways as S. Barnabas was; alike in gifts of nature, in gifts of fortune, and in gifts of

Grace. And yet, in spite of all these good gifts, we find him in life and death, faithful to the Giver. But why do I say *in spite* of them? Because of the great danger, which, as a rule, almost always goes along with great gifts. And herein is the reason of the prayer of the Collect, where we ask God, not only for His Gifts, but also for Grace to use them always for His Honour and Glory.

Let us consider this subject more closely, and see how needful is this petition, by the remembrance of the sad way, in which all around us, we see God's good Gifts abused. How many, for instance, allow a natural gift, such as beauty of person, to lead them into folly and sin. How many employ the gift of influence over others for evil purposes. How many use their powers of acuteness and skill, not for God's Glory, but in over-reaching and defrauding others. And,

to come more closely to ourselves, as regards the goods of this life with which God has blessed us, be it much or little. Are *we using* them as we ought to do. Are we paying our way honestly? Are we giving what we can afford to the needy? as in to-day's Epistle, "every man according to his ability." And as regards spiritual gifts, are we striving to use them for God's Glory, in all humility? Think of the warning of Moses, who because he did not glorify God at the waters of Meribah, was not suffered to enter the Promised Land. Well may we pray in the words of the Collect, "Leave us not, we beseech Thee, destitute of Thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway to Thy Honour and Glory."

Such considerations might indeed make us fear the possession of the Gifts of God *if we stood alone*. As I once heard a good man say,

the dread of the danger of riches, makes one actually fear almost to be rich. And so it might be said of almost all God's Gifts, since all have, as a rule, their accompanying temptation. Talents may tempt to pride and self-conceit ; riches, to avarice ; spiritual gifts, to self-confidence, and presumption. Yet talents, riches, spiritual gifts, are all good, for they are God's Gifts. The danger is, not in the gifts themselves, but in the abuse of them. They are great and unspeakable blessings, if we use them rightly. Nay, in the Collect we pray for them, and in S. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, we are told to "desire spiritual gifts," and to covet them earnestly, but yet above all things to seek for the Gift of Love, the "more excellent way."

It mattered little, comparatively speaking, that S. Barnabas was born of rich parents, in a rich country ; that he was of the tribe of Levi,

that he had a good education, that he was himself possessed of property in his own power, and that he was comely in person. It mattered little even that he bestowed all his goods to feed the poor, or that he gave his body to die a martyr's death; he might have *been and done* all this it may be, without being dear to God. But it was all of consequence, of the highest consequence, when we know that he was also "the Son of Consolation;" that he did all this out of love to his God, and for his dear Master, and for those for whom He died. It is of the deepest moment that of him Holy Scripture writes, "A good man and full of the Holy Ghost." And the Gift of Charity of which we have been speaking, we cannot too earnestly seek after. In this there is no danger, for all other graces are combined in that of Divine Love. Thus in

the Gospel for the day, Jesus gives it as His one Command, as if there were none other,—“This is My Commandment, that ye love one another.” Then at the end of the Gospel, as if to cheer us when we so deeply feel our need of this grace, He reminds us that all is of Him. That we have not chosen Him, but that He hath chosen us, and ordained our work in this life for us, and that His desire is, that we should bring forth fruit, and that our fruit should remain, that, saith He, “*Whatsoever* ye shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you.”

Therefore, above all, and as our chiefest safeguard let us pray earnestly for the Grace of Love. O! well would it be, if rich and poor alike, would fervently seek this priceless Gift of God,—this fulfilment of the Command of our Lord, Who said of them who do His Will, “Ye are My *friends*.”

And now you will like to know, the very little which we can trace, of the end of the holy Apostle, S. Barnabas. After the last mention of him in the Acts, when he returned to Cyprus, it is thought by some, that he went into Italy, and founded a church at Milan; but it is most probable that he remained in his native country. It is supposed also that it was in Cyprus he suffered Martyrdom, being imprisoned in one of the synagogues in which he was disputing, where, after being tortured, he was stoned to death. So it is thought S. Barnabas died, and that thus "the Son of Consolation" obtained his crown, "not by might nor by power, but by *My Spirit*, saith the Lord of Hosts." "A good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of Faith."

And are any of us striving to walk in the footsteps of S. Barnabas? Are we endeavour-

ing after his pattern to be the sons and daughters of consolation? There is no lack of those around us, as we have before said, who need comfort. There are tears on all sides to be wiped away, sorrow on all sides to be comforted, sickness on all sides to be soothed, death to be mourned over, trouble all around us. Yes, and there is joy, too, and life and gladness, and the young needing patient sympathy, and little children longing for kindness, and the aged needing support, and all yearning for *Love*.

In the Service for to-day we seem to see very strikingly the *affinity* of the Saints, and their likeness one to the other, and S. Barnabas' Day seems to prepare our minds, in several particulars, for the Feast of the great Friend and Forerunner of our Lord, St. John the Baptist, whom we next celebrate. Almost on the same page of our Prayer Books we find

the two Services. In the Gospel for the Festival of S. Barnabas, we find our Lord telling us who are His friends, even those who fulfil His Commands, especially His Command of Love. This is one of our lessons on the Day of the Son of Consolation, and the first words which strike our eyes, in looking at the Epistle for S. John the Baptist's Day, who was emphatically "the Friend of the Bridegroom," are "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." Even so. For one of the main characteristics of God's Saints, is ever this overflowing Charity, they are ever in one way or other Sons of Consolation. And only so far as we are striving to be so, too, are we really living members of Christ's Mystical Body.

We keep this Festival of S. Barnabas, at the time when the early summer is in perfect beauty, when God's Gifts are glowing around

us in maturing loveliness, and all nature seems to "laugh and sing," in the noon-tide glory of the summer sun. What the June day would be without the genial rays of the all-reviving sunshine, so are our hearts, when the Love of God is not shining there; and more lovely than all earth's scenes of beauty, is the heart where that Love reigns, which is shed abroad within us by the Gift of the Spirit, through the Sun of Righteousness.

No sweeter fruit could spring from the keeping of S. Barnabas Day, than an increase of the blessed Gift of Charity, and I would that all who take up this reading, would make it their daily practice, to use the beautiful prayer for the Grace of Divine Love, which the Church puts into our mouths, even for *That Most Excellent Gift*, which is the very Bond of Peace and of all virtues. (*See Collect for Quinquagesima.*)

S. John Baptist's Day.

(JUNE 24.)



THE FORERUNNER AND FRIEND.

“And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the Face of the Lord to prepare His Ways.”—*S. Luke* i. 76.

WE have now come to the Day to which we before alluded, namely S. John the Baptist's Day, or as it is also called “The Nativity of S. John Baptist.” For let us observe, this Day is not, as in the case of most of the other Festivals, a commemoration of the *death* of the Saint especially remembered, but

of his nativity or birth. The reason of this no doubt is, on account of the wonderful circumstances connected with it, which the Church has considered were of too great importance to be passed over, since S. John's nativity was miraculously ordered, and was an event alike so great, that it was heralded by the Angel Gabriel, and of such joy, that it was declared by the same Angelic Messenger, "Many shall rejoice at his birth."

I have entitled this Reading "The Fore-runner and Friend." Of the first title the text speaks, where S. John is described as he who was to "go before the Face of the Lord to prepare His Ways." In this character he is also spoken of in the Epistle, and there also is shadowed forth his most touching character of the *friend* of our Lord,—how he was to lose all thought of self in his Ministry for Jesus,—

how his office was, not to set forth his own glory, but to say unto the Cities of Judah, "Behold your God." And in accordance with this we afterwards read of him as exclaiming, "Behold the Lamb of God!" and as teaching, "He that cometh after me, is preferred before me." "He must increase, but I must decrease."

There are few things I think amongst the many touching incidents recorded in Holy Scripture, more touching than the fragments we are permitted to gather up, concerning the friendship of S. John for our Blessed Lord. So high was it, so noble, so unselfish! A pattern for all highest friendship, and a revelation to us of what we should be, if we would in any degree, after his example, prepare the way of the Lord, and make in the desert of this world, a highway for our God.

If we would in any sense be the Fore-runners of Jesus, we must be first His *friends*. In the Gospel for S. Barnabas' Day, we read, if you remember, some Words of our Lord, which teach us, on what this Divine Friendship must be founded, namely, on the keeping of God's Commandments,—“Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” Such we find was the ground-work of S. John's friendship for our Lord. His whole life was spent in striving to lead others to do God's Will, and to keep His Commandments, nay, his very death was caused by his resolute bravery in rebuking sin. So we read in the third chapter of *S. Luke*, when various classes of persons came to his Baptism, that on their enquiry, “What shall we do, then?” his answers all pointed to the Law and Will of God. The first, to the Law of Love. The second, to up-

rightness and justice. The third to gentleness, truth, contentment. His was very practical teaching. He taught men that if they would repent, they must "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." He was ever drawing men's minds from their own corrupt practices to the contemplation of that pure Revelation of the Mind of God, of which the Psalmist writes, that "The Law of the Lord is an undefiled Law, converting the soul." He did not ask his disciples for feelings, but he demanded *deeds*. He pointed out to them as it were from whence they had fallen, and in the Spirit of our Lord's Own Teaching, called upon them to "*Repent, and do the first works.*"

So he brought them back to the standard of perfection, which should ever be the aim of God's people. And how necessary it is for us all to be from time to time so

brought back. We are truly and indeed as children. Take a very homely comparison. Have you never noticed when you set a child anything to copy, how by degrees, it almost entirely loses sight of the example you have placed before it, and goes on and on, copying and re-copying its own mistakes, looking down lower and lower on the page it may be, and quite forgetting to compare what it is doing, with the pattern you placed before it, of what it should have done ?

And so exactly is the case with us. God has placed before us a perfect pattern of His Will, a Law which applies to every action of our lives, leaving nothing untouched by it. Yet we are very apt, even if we have begun to strive to live according to His Will, to lose by degrees a sense of the awful Purity of the perfect Love and Will of our God ; and so

gradually we slip away from our high standard, and reproduce in our lives day by day, a more and more defective copy of it. It was so in the days of S. John. And it is so now. Men needed then to have their minds recalled to God's Law, and to be convicted of sin, by the contemplation of His Purity, and it is not less so now. Yet, as of old, and as in the days of St. John, and as now, there was, and is, only one great Object in the teaching of all this, namely *Christ Jesus our Lord*. "The Law was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."

S. John was charged with a special mission. His teaching was not the *End* of the Law, but he came to prepare *His* Way, of Whom it is said, "*Christ* is the End of the Law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

The thought of Jesus then, was the hidden main-spring of S. John's life, and in this deep

well of reverential love and union of purpose with his Lord, was the secret of his whole ministry, his austere life, and the confidence of his Divine Friendship. The most striking notice of him in this character, is found in his own words in the third chapter of S. John's Gospel, which are recorded as having been spoken when he was in Onon near to Salim, just at the time of our Lord's ministry, when S. John's disciples were perplexed by reason of it. It was then that he plainly unfolded to to them his own mission, as simply that of a Forerunner, and then incidentally is shown to us, his more lovely and loyal character as a *Friend*. "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him." "*The Friend* of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's Voice, this

my joy therefore is fulfilled." "He must increase *but I must decrease.*"

These words of S. John are indeed so divine, so entirely heavenly in their teaching, that in concluding the reading of them, we almost start with the thought of their likeness to those of our Blessed Lord. And his further words, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His Hands. He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life," so speak in the Spirit of His Divine Master, so prove his reception by faith of Him "of Whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write," that we recall the words of Jesus when He said, "Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." "Notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he."

In these concluding words of our Blessed Lord, we are brought as it were to the personal application of this history. We are recalled from the more immediate contemplation of S. John, to the thought, what am *I* doing to imitate him? And, if it be so great a thing to be in the Kingdom of Heaven, what proof have I that I am enrolled among the Citizens of the New Jerusalem above? What am I doing personally or by the instrumentality of others, to prepare men's minds to receive the Christ? What am I doing to raise the standard of religion around me? Do I truly repent of the past, according to S. John's preaching, "And after his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the Truth's sake?" Am I in truth the *friend* of Jesus? Am I humble, unselfish, ready for any self-sacrifice for His

Sake? Is the whole temper of my life expressed in those touching words of S. John, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Myself nothing, *Jesus* all things? Then if it be so in any degree, in just such proportion shall we lead others to Jesus, in just such degree shall they take knowledge of us, that we have been with Him. We shall only be His forerunners in proportion as we are His friends.

And now, what more shall we say? Surely no more is needed than the very aim herein set before us, to be the Friends of God, and the Forerunners of Jesus. Only let us not forget, that to be one, we must be both. If we would labour to bring the ungodly to repentance, we must ourselves be true penitents: if to holiness, we must for their sakes, after our Lord's Example, sanctify ourselves, that they also may be sanctified. We must live for others. If we



we would lead others to love God, we must love them. Who will have any power for God, with the impure, save those who by His Grace are pure? Who lead the intemperate to soberness, but those who are themselves sober? Who draw sinners to Jesus, but those who already love Him? Shall we not then press forward? Is not the Lord calling to us, as on this day, "Put ye in the sickle for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. The Day of the Lord is near. The heavens and the earth shall shake: But the Lord will be the hope of His people."

Yes, all around us iniquity is abounding, and the love of the world for the things of the Lord has waxed cold, and the Day of the Lord is at hand. What then shall we do? Let us arise and go into the wilderness and prepare our-

selves for the great work of the Lord, laying deep the foundation of true sorrow for our sins in earnest prayer and humiliation before God, and then as He permits us, let us go forth in His Strength, whether in the quiet walks of life, or in the more stirring scenes which may be our portion ; let us so live before God, that we may evermore be the friends of Jesus ; and amongst men, that we may be His faithful heralds and forerunners. Amen.



St. Peter's Day.

(JUNE 29.)



THE FOOD OF THE WORD.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

S. Matt. xvi. 16.

THE Collect for to-day seems at once to divide the opening of the subject for the Reading for this Festival into three parts. First, we are reminded of our Lord's earnest charge to S. Peter to feed His flock. Then we are shown what that Food must be, where-with His servants feed His sheep,—namely,

God's Holy Word, and lastly we have pointed out to us, the only way in which we can benefit by this Heavenly Food,—namely, by feeding upon it, and obediently carrying out and practising its Holy precepts.

Now it is very evident that before any can feed others as regards the things of God, they must be possessed of that food by which they are to sustain them, they must know by Faith, what they teach. It was so with S. Peter. He had grasped, by God's Grace, the True Nature of the Word made Flesh, before he was called to feed the flock, which the Word alone could nourish. His glowing earnest confession in the text, taken from the Gospel of the day, shows us this; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

There are three ways in which the Word of God is by Faith, the Food of His people : as

the written Word, as the Word preached or read, and as the Personal Word, even Jesus Himself.

In connection with the reception of the written Word as Food, there is a very striking passage in the Prophecy of Ezekiel. God, we are there told, sent unto him a roll of a book (so described on account of the way in which books were then written on large sheets or skins rolled together), and commanded him saying, "Eat that thou findest, eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. Then," said Ezekiel, "Then did I eat it, and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." And here let us pause for a moment and reflect. This is a very strong and wonderful figure, of the way in which we should receive the Word of God. Do we know anything of it? Have we ever *fed* upon His Word? Have we ever known

what it was in times of deep trial, of sorrow, and of spiritual desolation, to receive it into our souls, by Faith, as the very Bread of Life, and to go in the strength of that Meat, perseveringly along our path of trial? If we have ever known this, then we shall be enabled to understand something of those words of our dear Lord, uttered in the time of His strong temptation, "*It is written*," that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God."

But more. If we have ourselves so fed upon the Word, we must not keep the knowledge of it to ourselves. S. Peter received the Word, and afterwards the Command, "Feed My sheep," and when Ezekiel had eaten the roll of the book, and had found it in his "mouth as honey for sweetness," he was commanded saying, "Son of Man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with My Words unto

them." The Psalmist alike says, "How sweet are Thy Words unto my throat, yea sweeter than honey unto my mouth," And "My lips shall utter praise when Thou hast taught me Thy Statutes." "My tongue shall speak of Thy Word."

It is then true that we can only sustain others, in proportion as we have been sustained of God, and also, that if we have been so comforted of Him, we must seek to impart the same consolation to others.

But not only is the soul nourished through the written Word of God, but through the Word preached and read also. "The Lord gave the Word, great was the company of the preachers." "Cast thy *bread* upon the waters." "When Thy Word *goeth forth*, it giveth light and understanding unto the simple." "The lips of the righteous feed many." And in the

judgment of Israel in the Prophet Amos we read, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Words of the Lord."—*Amos* viii. 11, 12, 13.

Yet though an Ezekiel may teach the people of the Lord, and a S. Peter administer Food to the flock of Christ,—what will it advantage if we receive not their testimony, and hearken not obediently to their preaching? What will it profit to have heard the Word, if we do it not? So in the Collect, we ask not only that it may be faithfully preached by all Bishops and Pastors, but that the people may *obediently follow the same*, that so at length "they may receive the Crown of Everlasting Glory."

How earnest and attentive then should we be, in listening to the Word read and preached!

How careful should we be, to endeavour to practice that which we have heard! But there is yet another way in which the Word of God, is our food, and this in the most solemn of all ways. Jesus, the Personal Word, is Himself the very true Bread of Life.

In the 6th chapter of S. John's Gospel, He reveals Himself over and over again in this character. "This is that Bread which came down from Heaven." "I am the Living Bread." "Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood hath Eternal Life."

Yes, "*whoso eateth.*" But it is a fearful thing to think of these words, and of that other text, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood ye have no Life in you," and then to remember how multitudes day by day, and week by week, neglect the means of Grace, of which these passages so forcibly by

anticipation speak, and pass by God's Altar, and turn away from the Bread of Life, when all things are prepared and the Holy Feast made ready. Does he not whisper to every soul who acts thus, in words of deepest tenderness, "With desire have I desired to eat this Pass-over with *you*." "Will *ye* also go away?" "Doth this offend you?" "The Words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are Life." "Come for all things are now ready."

Having gone thus far in our subject, you will perhaps like to hear something more particularly relating to S. Peter himself, after he had been commanded to feed Christ's flock. In the Epistle for to-day, we read the account of his imprisonment, and of the wonderful manner in which God delivered him by the Ministry of an Angel. But S. Peter had much more than this to suffer for Jesus'



sake. After many labours for his Lord, in different countries, he at length came to Rome, and there having roused the anger of the Emperor Nero, by his zeal for God, especially with regard to putting down the imposture and heresy of Simon Magus, he was by him put to death, about thirty-six years after our Lord was crucified. He died like Him on a Cross, but would not allow himself to suffer in the same posture, since he owned himself unworthy to die as Jesus had died, and therefore begged of the officers, charged with his execution, that he might be crucified with his head downwards.

And now what concluding lesson can we draw from our reading of to-day? The Three-fold Word of God has been placed before us as the Food of the Soul, in the Word written, as the Word read and preached, and as the Personal Word. But are we so regarding and

receiving it? Can we say with S. Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go, Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life!" Or with Job, "I have esteemed the Words of His Mouth more than my necessary food." Or with David, "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is." If it be so with us, then our meditation of Him will be sweet, and as we "ponder these things," we shall daily more and more "understand the Loving-kindness of the Lord," and grow in the love of the brethren, striving to lead all around us into the Knowledge and Love of God.

Then will be no neglected Bibles, no forsaken Churches, no Heavenly Feast disregarded. But, as in the days of old, the Word of the Lord will be precious unto us, and we shall "go unto the Altar of God" with joy and gladness.

"Make we beseech Thee, O Almighty God,



all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach Thy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the Crown of Everlasting Glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."



St. James the Apostle.

(JULY 25.)



FORSAKING ALL.

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.”—*Acts* xii. 1, 2.

IF we would truly profit by the Church's teaching week by week, and day by day, we must ever approach her lessons with thoughtfulness and diligence. With thoughtfulness, in order that we may strive to enter into her mind, and see why she has ordered this or that; and with diligence, that we may perseveringly trace out the lessons she intends to

teach us. We shall not however always at first sight discover her mind, nor be able to follow it, without giving to it both time and labour.

So you see, to-day, the full lesson of the Collect is not apparent in the Epistle and Gospel. We must go further and search out the passage to which the Collect refers.

But before tracing the history of the call of St. James, let us endeavour so to divide this day's Reading into definite portions, that we may carry away a clear idea of its lessons. First then, we will meditate on the call of St. James, and his response to it; secondly, on what we are to forsake after his example, and how we are to do so, and thirdly, what must be the fruits of our faith, *if* we have forsaken all. We will then conclude with a brief notice of St. James, and a short general application of the subject to ourselves.

First then as to the call of S. James, and his response to it. We read in the 4th chapter of S. Matthew's Gospel, and the 18th verse, of the call of S. Andrew and S. Peter. And then we read of our Blessed Lord in the 21st verse in these words, "And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the Son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."

Here then within a very short compass we have the account of St. James' call, and of the way in which he responded to it. And yet all that we should examine, does not appear on the surface. For it is probable that S. James had much more to forsake than some of the other Apostles, since, though he and his father both followed the trade of fishermen, yet must they

have been of some note in that profession, and people of property, since in S. Mark we read of "the hired servants" with whom S. James and S. John left their father when called by Jesus. This adds great weight to the lesson of the Collect, and the example of S. James, for the more a man leaves for the sake of his Lord, the more like Jesus is he, and so, the more worthy of imitation.

And here we come to our second point, namely, what are *we* to forsake after the example of S. James, and how can we do so? In answer to the first question we must reply that we must like him forsake *all* for God. Perhaps, however, you start at this, and you think, "I have a pleasant home around me, and I have dear ones that I would not leave for all the world, am I to forsake these, *to go away from them*, in order to serve God and to win

Heaven?" Wait a moment and think whilst I put a few questions to you. First, as to your pleasant home. It is the Gift of God, a good Gift, as all His Gifts are. He gave it you in Love. But, has it got your heart? Whether is your first thought on looking round it, "How good the Lord has been to me, O how must I strive to please Him in return!" or is it, "What a nice house to be sure we have got, we must be careful of it and pay great attention to it, that we may keep comfortable?" And then perhaps you set your heart upon it, and forget it is only a tent by the way-side, and that though it be won by your industry, it is still the Gift of God, and the fruit of His Blessing on your labours.

Now shall I tell you how you are to leave your home for Christ's sake?

By renouncing the wrong view of it, and by



taking up the right one. Only holding it as a Gift of God for His Glory, and with a thankful heart so long as He pleases. And this rule applies to everything we possess. In the case of those you love. Ask how you are loving them. Is it so that your affection for them blinds you as it were to the Love of God? Does the thought of them come between your soul and the thought of God? Does care for them hinder you in the service of God? If so, there must be something wrong. God should be your First Thought, and this you must aim at, or else it cannot be well with you. You must forsake all love for His Love, by making Him and His Will, the one Object of your life. And this is the way in which most of us are called to forsake all after the example of S. James; and it is the principle of putting God and the things of God *first*, which will alone

enable us to fulfil well our present everyday duties, and which is the only true preparation for whatever God may see fit to call us to in the future ; while if we are thus living day by day, we shall be prepared and ready, if it be our Lord's Will, for a more actual surrender of the goods and sweet relationships of this life, as was literally the case in the history of S. James.

But there must be something more than the forsaking of all things, which we have been describing. The Collect not only prays that we may forsake all that is not in God, and of God, but it asks likewise that we may be evermore ready to follow His Holy Commandments. We are not only to *eschew* that which is evil, but to *cleave* to that which is good, to hold on in the right way, and to persevere even to the end. And this should be the effect or fruit of our forsaking all for God. So that we not only



leave all that is sin, for Love of Him, but for Love of Him likewise, *cleave* to all that is holy.

And now having traced some of the chief lessons of this Festival, as celebrated by our Church Services, let us consider more especially the history of S. James himself.

It is easy to see the connection between the Collect and Epistle, concerning the history of the Apostle, because the mention of his death in the Epistle corresponds with the thought of his obedience spoken of in the Collect, and shows that it was obedience unto death, and the true forsaking of all things for Christ's sake. It is not so easy, however, to connect both these with the Gospel, where we have the account of the request made by the mother of S. James, and his brother S. John, concerning their future place in the Kingdom of God. Let us think a moment. Is not the connection this? The

Collect speaks of our renouncing all worldly and carnal affections. And yet surely in the request of Salome, S. James's mother, there was a mixture of these very feelings, joined, may be, with a just desire for the welfare of her sons. Surely there was in her an over-anxiety, not only for their salvation, but for their *position* in God's kingdom; not only a laudable endeavour for their future welfare, but a desire also that they should prosper in the way she had marked out for them, rather than in that way which God had designed for them. But God will not have it thus with us. Jesus, indeed, has told us, "I go to prepare a place for you." But He does not reveal to us *what* will be the place for each; He leaves that for the future revelation of His Glory and His Love, and so raises within us holy longings after the known Blessedness of Heaven, as in the h

O Paradise ! O Paradise !
I greatly long to see
The special place my dearest Lord
Is destining for me.

Yes, the "House not made with hands" is secure to every faithful soul ; but for the knowledge of what that Home will be we must *wait*, in persevering prayer and work for God, knowing that our "labour shall not be in vain."

Of S. James after our Lord's Ascension very little is known, but it is most probable that he spent the years of his ministry in Judea and the neighbouring countries. His bold reproofs, and vigorous contention for the Truth, drew upon him at length the hatred and revenge of Herod, and, as we read in the text taken out of the Epistle, he "stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church, and he killed James the brother of John with the sword." S. James was the first apostle who suffered martyrdom.

There is a very beautiful tradition connected with his death, related by the historian Eusebius. He tells us that as S. James was led to the place of his execution, the man who had been his accuser at the time of his trial, and who had been convinced of the truth through beholding the great courage and constancy of S. James, came and fell at his feet, and earnestly begged forgiveness for what he had said against him. S. James, we are told, after recovering from his surprise, tenderly embraced him, saying unto him, "Peace, my son ; peace be to thee, and the pardon of thy faults." Upon this he at once professed himself a Christian, and was beheaded at the same time as S. James. So died this great Apostle, by the decree of Herod, of whose own most terrible death we read briefly in the Acts, chap. xii., 20th and following verses.

And now how shall we sum up our lesson ?

Let to-day's meditation leave us with *three* particular thoughts impressed upon our minds. First, that we must strive so to live, that we may be ready and willing for whatever our Lord may see fit to call us to. Second, that we can only be thus prepared to respond to our Lord's call, by always making God and the Will of God our *First* consideration, and so forsaking *all things* for His Name's Sake. Thirdly, that we must not only forsake all that is sinful for the Love of God, but that we must likewise cling to, and fight for, and struggle after, all that is Holy and Good, that so we may shine in the darkness of this world, to the Glory of our God, encouraging it may be some poor soul to seek Him, Who is indeed the very True Light of the world.

Thus, though all unconsciously perchance, we shall be found labouring for the Lord, *if we*

be faithful; and as we are told, S. James' constancy won the conversion of his accuser, though at the time he knew it not, we must strive so to live, to speak, and to act, that men may take knowledge of us that we have forsaken all for the love of God, and are finding all Love and Power and Joy in Him. Amen.



S. Bartholomew the Apostle.

(*AUGUST 24.*)



THE LOVE OF THE WORD.

“They were healed every one.”—*Acts* v. 16.

HOW wonderfully varied is the teaching of the Church, how marvellously adapted to the special needs of her children ! At one time we find her speaking to us on our own particular necessities, and teaching us how to lay them before God. At another she directs us to pray for those who are in trouble, or for the wanderers from the fold, or for those who have never yet been brought in. Again, she bids us

cry unto God for our pastors and teachers; again, may be, for the whole Church of God scattered throughout all lands. It is so to-day; the Collect is one for the universal Church of Christ, and in it we are bidden, as it were, to lose sight of ourselves, excepting in so far as we belong to her, and to pray earnestly for the whole family of God. And what do we ask for the Church? We ask that she may *love* the Word, and both preach and receive the same. The whole Collect is full of earnest teaching on *reality* in religion. First, we have S. Bartholomew placed before us as a pattern of this reality in service. We are told that he *truly* believed and preached the Word; that is, with a simple faith, with a single eye, with a guileless heart, with a determination and perseverance which by the grace of God bore him safely up, above the rough waters of affliction,

and brought him at length to the haven where he would be. Then, after considering his example, we ask that the Church may love the Truth which he believed, and both preach and receive the same ; and, as if to make assurance doubly sure, she bids us further pray for her, not *merely* that she may love the Word, though that petition would seem to embrace all things, but she teaches us to pray too that she may show her love by acts, and may be earnest and faithful in endeavouring to spread the knowledge of the Word by the great Scriptural means of preaching. Nor is this all, for lest she should think that sufficient, again the prayer goes on and asks that she may not only *preach* but *receive* the same. Ah ! how beautiful this is ! Does it not remind us of the holy fear of S. Paul when he was so careful to guard his own religion by strict discipline, lest, as he

touchingly writes, "when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

And now let us consider these things as regards ourselves as members of the Church of Christ. It is easy for us to say we *love* the Word ; but, if we do so, our love must be shown forth by acts. It is easy to preach to others, it is very difficult indeed to practise ; and yet it is only in proportion as we practise what we preach, or earnestly endeavour to do so, that we are *real* in religion, and alike true members of Christ and His Church. And this rule applies not only to those who are commissioned to preach the Word with the authority of Priests and Ministers of the Gospel, but to all who teach, or in any way instruct others. Their teaching and their own lives must correspond in earnest endeavour, or who will hear ? Neither have any a right to lay burdens on others which



they themselves are unwilling to touch with one of their fingers! Let us *all* think of these things, and see how our lives correspond with our opinions, our judgments of others, our words, our maxims, our precepts; and how we, as members of the Church of Ghrist, are *loving* the Word of God, setting forth the same, and receiving it into our own souls.

Now, I spoke at the beginning of our Reading to-day of the marvellous adaptability of the Church to all our spiritual needs, for there is no necessity of the soul which she is not able to supply. And this is so, because she is charged with the whole Truth of God, which to-day we pray she may receive, love, and preach; and that Truth, or Word of God, is so revealed to us that there is no spiritual hunger which it cannot fulfil or satisfy, no sorrow which it cannot console. It is the provision of our

Heavenly Father for His large and wide-spread family, the Holy Catholic Church, by which I mean His *Universal* Church, for that is the meaning of the word Catholic. Now you all know that in a large family there are always great differences of dispositions, and therefore greatly different needs; and as families grow up there are varying circumstances connected with each member, all needing various treatment, various consolation, various support. Just so is it in the family of God. And yet, never was a Christian in any need through all the more than 1800 years since Jesus lived and died, which the Word of God could not, through His Church, supply.

And of this I would especially speak to-day. Though the words of the text apply indeed chiefly to those miracles of bodily healing which are characterised in the Epistle for this Festival

as the many signs and wonders which were wrought among the people by the hands of the Apostles, yet they exactly describe also the blessing of all those who love and receive the Word of God, as administered by His Holy Church. None are sent empty away ; all who thus receive the Word are "healed every one." So potent, so powerful is this Word, through the grace of God, that a promise received in true faith, however feeble, a holy service frequented in sincere trust, however weak, brings with it its own proportion of grace and blessing. "They were healed every one." Yes, all who came to the Apostles, the true Ministers of the Church of God, found a supply for all their necessities. And so will it ever be with all those who thus come, in order to have their afflictions, their diseases, and troubles ministered unto. The Church is as one vast hospital

for sin-sick souls,—one all-embracing home for pardoned sinners,—one great nursery and school for saints ; and there is to be found the true Balm of Gilead ; and there the Good Physician working by His Spirit, through the divers orders whom He calls and permits to be fellow-workers with Him in the salvation of all men.

How great, then, is the charge of the Church of God ! How should we pray for her, and seek in truth to belong to her, in all humility and lowliness of service, after the example of Him of whom we read in to-day's Gospel as declaring, " I am among you as He that *serveth*." And is it not so still ? Yes, truly. Our Blessed Lord rests not day or night in the service of His Church, in seeking His wandering sheep, in bringing in the outcast. In every means of grace He is by our side. We indeed only *see* His ministers. But there is His Power, and there

the Presence of His grace; if it were not so, where would be the blessing and power of every sacred service and ordinance, where would be the grace of Sacraments, if He were not there by His Spirit, and by His appointed servants to minister to us. "I am among you as *He that serveth.*"

Now, in all these Holy days, we have one particular saintly example brought before us for our imitation,—one special exemplification of the Power of the Word of God. To-day we are called upon particularly to consider the character of S. Bartholomew. You know that he is supposed to have been the same person as Nathaniel, and that he is remarkable for the reality, integrity, and sincerity of his character—"an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." This is the testimony borne by our Lord Himself concerning him, in S. John's Gospel, 1st chapter,

47th verse. And the thought of the truth and candour of S. Bartholomew's mind corresponds with all we have previously drawn out from the teaching of the Collect. It was, doubtless, this singleness of purpose, as we have before said, which sustained the Apostle, by the grace of God, faithful even to the last. He laboured, we are told, in India, and there left the Gospel of S. Matthew written in Hebrew, which was afterwards found in that country by a learned traveller who came there. He then preached in Asia, and finally removed to Armenia, where, endeavouring to reclaim the people from idolatry, he was put to a fearful death, being, as some suppose, flayed, or crucified, or may be both. He bore his sufferings and cruel usage with cheerfulness, and, as is related, you will remember, of S. Andrew, he comforted and confirmed his Christian converts to the last moment

of his life. In consequence of the tradition of the way in which S. Bartholomew suffered, we find him often in pictures represented with a flaying knife in his hand, just as we frequently see S. Andrew pictured as leaning on his own peculiar cross shaped like the letter X.

What thought, then, shall we chiefly take away from this day's Reading? This, I think, that if we *love* the *Word of God*, and receive it into our hearts as little children,—with true simple mindedness and integrity of purpose, as members of Christ's Holy Church, and, therefore, as expecting, through her, to receive our richest blessings,—we shall find there is no need which the ministry of the Word of God cannot supply, through all the varied means of grace which the Love of Jesus provides for us, so that the beautiful hymn for this Saint's day is most true and comforting in the lines—

How blest are they whose hearts are pure,
From guile their spirits free,
To them shall God reveal Himself,
They shall His glory see.

They, as they walk the painful world,
See hidden glories rise ;
Our God the sunshine of His love
Unfolds before their eyes.

For them far greater things than these
Doth Christ the Lord prepare,
Whose bliss no heart of man can reach,
No human voice declare.

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God Whom we adore,
Be glory, as it was, is now,
And shall be evermore. Amen.



S. Matthew the Apostle.

(SEPTEMBER 1.)



THE LOVE OF MONEY.

“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.”—*S. Matt.* ix. 9.

IN the 6th chapter of the Epistle of S. Paul to Timothy, we find these striking words, “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil. . . . But thou, O man of God, flee

these things." It seems to me that these words will help us to understand the special lesson of to-day, which is unfolded to us in the Collect. There, after commemorating the call of S. Matthew, we pray that we may have Grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches.

But why should these thoughts be brought to our notice to day? What was there in the profession of S. Matthew before our Lord called him, which should especially give a deep meaning to the words of the Collect, and form the centre to our meditation on this Festival. And here we shall again have need of diligence in order to answer this question. But just by the way let me remark, that if any wish to know more about these blessed Saints of God of whom I have been writing, they will find much concerning their history in the good ol

book to which I have before alluded, namely, "*Nelson's Fasts and Festivals.*"

But now as to S. Matthew's profession before our Lord called him. Of what sort was it? S. Matthew was a Publican. Not what would now be understood by that word, but a toll-gatherer or tax-collector, a very lucrative employment, but one, as you will see, of evil-repute. This office arose on account of the subjection of the Jewish people to the Romans, and therefore by the Jews, was looked upon as especially to be abhorred. Since it ever reminded them of their country being under a foreign yoke. But there were two other causes which made the office of a Publican in those days odious. First, those who filled this post were usually natives of the conquered countries which the Romans governed, and one may therefore well perceive how hateful their profes-

sion must have been to their fellow-countrymen. And secondly, those who held the office of tax-collectors, or Publicans, were proverbial for their extortions and exactions. You will remember that when the Publicans came to St. John Baptist, and said, "Master, what shall we do?" His answer was, "*Exact* no more than that which is appointed you," plainly showing what was the ruling vice in their case to be feared. Now this exaction probably arose from the fact, that these Native Publicans only held their office at *second-hand*, being employed under Roman Publicans, who were men of distinction, and who farmed, or let out their office to the natives of the countries they had conquered and so when a Jew for instance, as Matthew was, became a Publican, he rented his post from a Roman, and therefore had to pay a fixed sum of money to him, before he made any for

self, and thus came the temptation to extortion and unfair dealing, in order to increase the profits as much as possible. So contemptible were these men considered, that you will remember the reproach cast up against our Blessed Lord was, that (as in to-day's Gospel) He associated with "Publicans and Sinners," as if the two must of necessity go together. I suppose from all this we may gather something of the nature of S. Matthew's profession, and of the hatred in which it was held by the Jews, —a hatred so strong, that it was deemed unlawful to do a Publican any office of common kindness, or to put money received from him to the rest of a man's estate, since it was supposed to have been gained by violence, or to form any alliance with the families of such. The Publican was deprived of all communion in Divine Worship, and was not admitted

to be a person fit to give evidence in any cause.

Now when we think of all this, two points seem to strike us, connected with the call of S. Matthew. First, the wonder-working Love and Power of Divine Grace, which in the Person of Christ, sought out even one in such a despised employment, showing us how there is no bar in any profession, however lowering, to the Power of the Grace of God. And secondly, the great beauty of S. Matthew's character is unfolded to us, in that he was willing to leave the lucrative post which he held, in order to embrace a life of poverty and hardship, at the call of Jesus. It was as if he had heard and realised those words, already quoted from S. Timothy,—“They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.



For the love of money is the root of all evil. . . . But thou, O man of God, flee these things." And S. Matthew *did* flee them, and the rich and despised Publican, became the poor disciple, but the beloved of God. What an exchange!

And now, what was one of the first-fruits of S. Matthew's conversion? Our Lord called unto him, saying, "Follow Me." "And he arose and followed Him." But there was something more, there was soon a further overflowing of generous love towards his dear Master. He is not content to leave all hope of present and future gain, but he must lavish upon his Lord that which he *does* possess, and may be, nay *surely*, he longs to bring others to the same Saviour Who has been his Salvation. So he makes "a great Feast in his own house" for Jesus, and invites a numerous com-

pany of Publicans and others to sit at meat with him. And do any of us ever follow his example? are we ready to leave our trade, our farms, our gainful occupations, at the Call of Jesus? When His Voice sounds to us saying, "Follow Me," do we rise up with readiness to follow Him? When the Church bell calls us to pray to and to praise Him, do we hasten thither with joy, singing with the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the House of the Lord." When the Voice of Jesus calls to us, saying, "Come, for all things are now ready," do we hasten with reverent joy to the Feast spread on the Table of the Lord? Do we follow Him as our Guide, our Example, our King? And if we do so, do we in any way still further follow S. Matthew's example? Do we strive not only to obey Christ Jesus our Lord, and to follow Him, but do we delight

in striving to please Him, to honour Him, to show our *love* to Him, to spend for Him and on His Service, the very best of everything He has given us, and do we endeavour also, to lead others to honour Him? All indeed are not rich, as S. Matthew appears to have been, but all can give of their best to God. All can honour Jesus by listening to His Voice, by following in His Footsteps, and by so living to Him in their own homes, that they are ever entertaining His Sacred Presence, and leading others so to do. But what is it that keeps so many of us back? What is it that absorbs our souls? What is it that prompts to over-carefulness about the things of this life, that keeps us from the House of God on the Lord's Day? What is it that opens our shops on His Day of Rest, that makes our weights light, and our balances uneven, that over-works those under us,

that leads to lying, fraud and all evil? Is it not as the Word of God tells us, "*The love of money,*" the "inordinate love of riches," against which the Collect prays?

And why is it so dangerous? Is it not because it takes the place of God? And so as the Bible again says "Covetousness . . . is *idolatry.*" "But thou, O man of God, flee these things."

Of S. Matthew's life after our Lord's Ascension, very little is known. For about eight years he is supposed to have been occupied in preaching the Gospel to his brethren the Jews, after which it is generally believed he went into the Asian Ethiopia, and that after a successful ministry in bringing many souls to God, he suffered Martyrdom at Nadabar, a city of that country, though by what death is uncertain.



We know not how, therefore, this holy Apostle obtained his final crown, but we do know how he prepared for the race which would assuredly end in the prize gained, in the crown won, in the course finished. We do know that he laid aside every weight and the easily besetting sin, we do know that he ran with patience the race set before him, "Looking unto Jesus." By him truly might have been said, in the words of the Epistle for the day, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness." "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." "They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown

men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil. . . . But thou, O man of God, *flee these things.*"



S. Michael and All Angels.

(SEPTEMBER 29.)



THE SERVICES OF ANGELS.

“Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”—
S. Matth. xviii. 4.

PERHAPS there is no subject more constantly spoken of in Holy Scripture, yet so little thought of and acted upon, as the comforting yet awful Doctrine of the Ministry of Angels. I say *awful* as well as comforting, for, as we shall see, the Ministry of Angels is twofold. They are Messengers of wrath, as well

as of Love, and ever waiting around the Throne of God to do His bidding, may be sent to us in either character.

In the Collect the services of the Holy Angels are spoken of in their relation both towards God and towards men, and we ask God to grant us their succour and defence, while in both the Epistle and Gospel we gather of what spirit we should be if we hope for their loving ministrations ; so that our subject is at once thus divided into three portions.

But, by the way of introduction, let us notice how unlike this Festival is to any other in our Calendar. On other Holy Days, we are called to meditate, may be, on some portion of our Lord's Life, or on that of one of His Saints, and to pray that we may follow their example ; but to-day we are called to commemorate S. Michael and All Angels, and to pray God to



grant us their aid and protection. To-day, too, we are warned by the example of the fallen Angels, and the veil being drawn aside for a brief space which separates us from the Great Unseen, we seem to hear alike the clash of Angel warfare and the soft rustle of Angel-wings, as we are admitted through the dim Vision of Faith to picture the countless Guardians of the little ones, as they stand round about the Throne, ever beholding the Face of God, and ready to "succour and defend" His chosen ones.

The whole subject of to-day's lesson is so full, that we shall not be able even to touch on much which might be said, but I trust that many will follow out the thoughts of this Reading for themselves, and trace the various histories in the Bible which bear upon the subject. First, then, as to the services of the Holy Angels towards God and men, Towards God, their

service is a perpetual one; they "*always*" do Him "service in Heaven;" they are the Ministers, as it were, about His Throne, the officers and servants of His Court. They are represented to us in Holy Scripture as very mighty, terrible, and glorious, attending on the various mysterious manifestations of the Presence of God.

In the sixth chapter of Isaiah his awful vision is recorded, when he saw "The Lord sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, and His Train filled the Temple. Above it stood the Seraphims; each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His Glory."

Also, in the first chapter of the prophecy of



Ezekiel, the Cherubims, as he saw them in his wonderful Vision, are spoken of as moving only in accordance with the will of the Spirit, and as attending on the awful manifestation of God's glory. When Ezekiel heard the noise of their wings as they went it was as the "noise of great waters, as the Voice of the Almighty, as the noise of an host." The Psalmist speaks of the Holy Angels as "the Chariots of God," as they "that excel in strength," as His servants "that do His pleasure,"—"Who maketh His angels spirits, His Ministers a flaming fire," while in the book of the Revelations, they are described as in numberless ways assisting in the service of Heaven. Between their service to God and man there is one connecting link. For when Jesus was made "a little lower than the angels," "for us men, and for our salvation,—and was made man," then they ministered to Him,

alike in His temptation, and in His Agony in the Garden, and in Him, to *God and Man*, “not two but one Christ.”

And now, what shall we say of their services to men,—of the succour, the counsel, the comfort, and deliverance in need, which they have supplied throughout all ages by the Will of God? Think of Hagar by the fountain of water, when the Angel found her, and counselled her to return to her mistress, and to be subject unto her. *Genesis* xvi. 7. Think of Manoah and his wife, and the wonderful visit of the Angel to them. *Judges* xiii. Think of the cases in the New Testament of the Angel-ministrations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, S. Joseph, and Zacharias. Think of the carrying up of Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, and of the deliverance of S. Peter out of prison.

Does not all this make us feel how earnestly

we should ask of God, their Heavenly succour and aid, and how eagerly we should claim as one of our dearest Baptismal privileges, the Guardianship of the Holy Angels? We know that they wait on our prayers. In Manoah's case, when he desired more information concerning his child, he prayed to God that the Angel might return to him,—“And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the Angel of God came again,” in answer to his prayer. And in the last sad hours of our Blessed Lord's Life upon earth, when S. Peter attempted to frustrate the designs of His enemies, think of those wonderful words when He said, “Thinkest thou not that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve Legions of Angels?” plainly showing that they are ever waiting at the Golden Gate, ready to

speed forth at God's Command, and in answer to prayer.

And now we must hasten on to our third division, namely, the consideration of the spirit we should be of, if we hope for their loving ministry. And surely we may gather to-day what that spirit should be, a Spirit of Humility, of desire to do only the Will of God, of constant childlike dependance upon Him. It was *Pride* which cast the fallen spirits out of the Joys of Heaven, and the Presence of God, and of the Holy Angels, who only seek to do His Will. And it is of the little ones, (who in the text from the Gospel of to-day are set forth as our examples), that our Lord said, "Their Angels do always behold the Face of My Father." Let us seek then these Graces of Humility, Obedience and Dependance upon God, and pray likewise with all earnestness the

prayer of this Day's Collect. There is great reason we should do so.

And this brings me to the portion of our subject to which I have before alluded, namely, the fact that there are cases, where Angels minister in wrath, and not in love, and that when pride and disobedience have taken root, they may be the messengers of the vengeance of God. It was so when as in the Epistle, S. Michael and his Angel-host, resisted the powers of evil, so that their place in the Kingdom of Heaven was no longer to be found. It was the case with Adam and Eve, when so soon as they had sinned, the Cherubim and Flaming Sword closed the gates of Paradise upon them. It was so in Balaam's case, when on his way to resist the Will of God, "The Angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him." (Numbers xxii. 22.)

What an awful warning is there not here for us !

And, now, there is one more thought we must notice. It is a thought of deepest comfort, and it is this : That the Angels of God, for whose guardianship we pray, are inconceivably powerful and glorious in the Strength of God, and can never fail us, if we are on the Lord's side. Notice in the Epistle, "There was war in Heaven ; Michael and his Angels fought . . . and the dragon fought and his angels *and prevailed not.*" And why ? Because the true servants of God can never be conquered, and S. Michael and his Angels fought on the side of God. And "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If we fight for God, God will much more fight for us. Truly we are not alone, (see 2 Kings vi. 16, 17, and Acts xxvii. 22—25,) but are surrounded by the

Powers of the unseen world. We are, through Jesus Christ, under the protection of our Heavenly Father, and members of His family both in Heaven and earth. We are encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses, and by an "innumerable company of angels." All these blessings are parts of our covenanted Baptismal heritage. But, remember, that though S. Paul wrote of these things to his Hebrew converts, yet he was constrained to close this bright and glorious record with an awful warning,—“Wherefore, we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.” “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” For there shall come a day when “The Son of Man shall send forth His Angels, and they shall gather *out of His King-*

dom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity. . . . Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Amen.

S. Luke the Evangelist.

(OCTOBER 18.)



THE HEALING OF THE SOUL.

“Only Luke is with me.”—2 *Tim.* iv. 11.

IN the Epistle of S. Paul to the Colossians, towards the close of the last chapter, S. Luke is spoken of as “Luke the beloved Physician.” We must not, however, conclude from this that he was of higher rank than were most of our Blessed Lord’s disciples, because in those days the art of physick was one practised by servants; so that this is also, in a special manner, one of the Festivals of the poor as well as of the rich.

In the Collect, S. Luke is spoken of in another character, namely, as an Evangelist,—a term which, though first applied to those who *preached* the Gospel, came afterwards to be confined to those four holy men who wrote the Gospels, containing the Life and Ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the first part of the Epistle for the day, the work of an Evangelist is spoken of in the character of a preacher of the Gospel, and in the latter part occurs the short text which forms the heading to our Reading, and shows how S. Luke was a faithful companion of S. Paul when others, from various causes, were leaving him. “Only Luke is with me,” saith he.

The Gospel, which is taken from that of S. Luke himself, shows how the seventy went forth two and two to prepare Christ’s way, and in this sense again to do the work of Evangelists, or



preachers of the Gospel, amongst those fields of this world all "white" and ready for the reapers, of which our Lord Himself said, "The harvest truly is great." All this, however, mainly brings before us the character of S. Luke as an Evangelist, whereas the Collect speaks of him chiefly as a Physician of the soul, and it is in this view that I am anxious to draw out the lesson for to-day. Nevertheless, we shall find as we proceed, that in celebrating him as a Physician of the soul, we shall also be commemorating him as an Evangelist, since we shall trace out those special passages of comfort which occur in the Gospel written by him, and which are not to be found in any other.

And first, S. Luke alone records the incident which proclaims our Blessed Lord as He Who had been sent to "heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,

and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." S. Luke, also, **is** the only Evangelist who relates the miracle of the raising of the widow's son, of the healing of the poor woman who "was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself," and of the cleansing of the ten lepers. (*S. Luke* iv., vii., xiii., and xvii.) S. Luke likewise alone notes the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the Publican. (*S. Luke* x., xv., xvi., xviii.) It is only also, in his Gospel, that we find the account of our Lord weeping over Jerusalem,—of His Last Prayer for His murderers,—of His forgiveness of the Penitent Thief,—and, after His Resurrection, of His conversation with the perplexed disciples as they journeyed towards Emmaus. (*S. Luke* xix. 41 ; xxiii. 34, 43 ; xxiv. 13.)

All these passages shew very strikingly, that S. Luke was in a prominent degree a recorder of the acts of Jesus as our Good Physician; and also, since they are recorded only by him, they surely point him out as one who specially loved to dwell on our Blessed Lord in these characters, being inspired to do so, so that he was called not only to be an Evangelist, but, also, “by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him” to be a “Physician of the soul,” that thus all our spiritual diseases “may be healed.” For, not to enumerate all the instances, think of the penitent without the tender comfort and encouragement of the narrative of the Publican’s acceptance, and of the welcome to his Father’s house of the long lost Prodigal,—or, lacking the knowledge that even the Penitent Thief was, on his repentance, fully and freely forgiven. Think of the poor and suffering, without the

parable of Lazarus ; of the sick, the weary, the forsaken, the dying, without the story of the Good Samaritan ; of the perplexed, without the account of the journey to Emmaus ; of the sinners, wanting the narrative of the cleansing of the lepers ; of the bereaved and lonely, without the story of the miracle at Nain.

And, further, it may be well here to notice, with *Nelson* and others, that S. Luke's Gospel is remarkable, as bringing out more especially our Lord's Priestly character ; and with this office we especially associate the thought of Spiritual Healing, of Divine Sustenance, of Heavenly Warning and Consolation. A prophet teaches, and foretells things to come ; a king rules and governs ; but a Priest of God is one specially appointed by Him to minister to sick and dying souls, and is ever at work endeavouring to bring them to God, being entrusted with

the various applications for the healing of such, which have been vouchsafed through His Love to the children of men. What Jesus did when on earth by His Own Power, even the Power of God, His Priests now do according to His Will, by the power and authority which He has committed unto them through His Church.

And yet more, as S. Luke so closely followed our Lord's Mind in His Ministry of Love and Healing, and as all God's true priests follow Christ and His Saints in their Holy Calling, so in our degree must we follow on in our Blessed Lord's Footsteps, dispensing everywhere, as God gives us opportunity, the Heavenly Balm of "Pure Religion and undefiled."

A very loving Sister of Mercy once said that "The Sisters . . . are posts on which all the world may come and rest their burden when they are weary." And with us all it should be

so, in our several degrees, and as we have ability. "Bear ye one another's burdens," is alike said to all of us, by the Spirit of Him, Who hath "Borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

What then is the record in this respect, upon which each of us has to look back? Have the tears of the sorrowful been poured out upon our bosoms,—has the weary head rested there,—has the wandering soul been there once more led to seek its God? Have the depressed found in us sweet cheerfulness, mingled with true sympathy? Have all found in us, according to our power, that which they lacked? If it is not so, we have not yet done, as we would have others do to us,—we do not love as we should do,—we are not yet true imitators of Jesus and His Saints.

But all that we have said about S. Luke thus

far, is what we find recorded of and by him in Holy Scripture. Let us endeavor to trace out likewise the little else that we can concerning him. *Nelson* tells us that S. Luke was born in Antioch, the famous capital of Syria, where the Disciples of Jesus were first called by the honourable name of *Christians*, (*Acts* xi. 26) and that it is most probable he was converted there by S. Paul, during his abode in that city. He became an inseparable companion of that Great Apostle in all his troubles, and especially after he went into Macedonia. It is indeed probable that he did not wholly leave S. Paul, until he had finished his course by Martyrdom, but we have no sure record either of his ministry or death, which did not take place, according to S. Jerome, until he had reached a great age. He left, not only his Gospel behind him, but, as we have before noticed in passing,

the Acts of the Apostles, an invaluable record to us of the earliest period of the Church's existence.

In the passage from which our text is taken, S. Luke is spoken of by S. Paul, as having been faithful when Demas had forsaken him. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world Only Luke is with me." And previously to this, he speaks of him, as one of his *fellow-labourers*." What a commendation must this have been in God's Sight, Who would have us all, as we have opportunity, minister to His true servants. "While we have time, let us do good unto all men; *and specially unto them that are of the Household of Faith*." And again, "God is not unrighteous," that He will forget your works, and labour that proceedeth of Love; which Love ye have shown for His Name's Sake, *Who have minis-*

tered unto the Saints, and yet do minister." Now if this be so in all cases, how much more especially must it be so, where God's people are in special trouble or sorrow, in danger or perplexity, such as was so frequently S. Paul's portion. Then it is we see how very dear to God His people are, and how lovingly He orders all things for their succour and aid, sending to his afflicted ones, just the sympathy and companionship they need.

All indeed have not the same trials, but if truly we are not tried as was S. Paul, have we striven to embrace S. Luke's ministry? Are our hearts *at liberty* for deeds of love? Or are they taken up only with our own concerns, or lost in the absorbing thought of self. If the latter, where then is the Example of Jesus, where the pattern set before us to-day? Where is that love which led one to write so

touchingly in some such words as these,—“I have no longer a will of my own, but I belong to those, to whom it shall please God to send me to relieve them!” How are we fulfilling our ministry? Of Jesus you know it is written, “Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.”

Of S. Luke, the Church in the Collect writes, “Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel . . . an Evangelist and Physician of the Soul.” And to us all the Word of God speaks in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and the poor wounded traveller, saying,—“A certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds . . . Then said Jesus, *Go and do thou likewise.*”



SS. Simon and Jude, Apostles.

(OCTOBER 28.)



UNITY.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the Common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.”—*Jude* 3.

IN the First Chapter of S. Paul's Epistle to the Phillippians, and the twenty-seventh verse, a passage occurs which I think helps us to understand the text for our Reading to-day, taken out of the Epistle.

It is this,—“Only let your conversation be as becometh *the Gospel of Christ*: that whether I come to see you, or else be absent, I may

hear of your affairs, *that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the Faith of the Gospel.*"

We see in taking these two passages together, that the "Faith once delivered unto the Saints," of which S. Jude speaks, is one and the same with that "Gospel of Christ," which if held in truth, will assuredly lead to such a conversation as S. Paul describes, namely, *steadfastness in the Unity of the Faith*, and united striving for it against the enemy.

There is no such thought in the Word of God, as that those who are in the Faith should be divided as to Doctrine and Practice.

To be a *Christian* in the early days of the Church, was necessarily to be *of the Church*. And it was to the Church only, that the Lord added daily "such as should be saved." This is a most solemn and awful thought in days of

separation and division such as those in which we live. For there is but, "One Faith," and "One Baptism," as we read in the unerring Word of God. *Ephes.* iv. 5.

Now the Collect for to-day tells us what the true Church is, namely, that Spiritual Temple, which is built on the "Foundation of *the Apostles and Prophets*. Jesus Christ Himself being the Head Corner-Stone." *Ephes.* ii. 20.

Surely we may here gather a very striking lesson. For of what use is a Foundation? Is it not that a Building may be raised upon it? And for what purpose is a Corner-Stone? Is it not in order to *unite* the two walls which meet in it?

And so God intends that on the Foundation which He has laid and on none other, His Church should be built. And he has knit together in one, the Church of the Old, and the

Church of the New Dispensation, ("That they without us," and we without them, "should not be made perfect,") by His only Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, That "Chief Corner-Stone, Elect, Precious," Which it pleased Him to "lay in Zion." Thus the Church is built, and it is against this Holy Temple that the "Gates of Hell shall not prevail."

Now it is very evident that there is but one true Church; Christ founded but one, and therefore except we be in union with it, we cannot be really of the Church of God.

How then are we acting? How is it with us?

Are *we* in union with that Holy and Spiritual Temple which is built on "The Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head Corner-Stone?"

I am afraid many only take *part* of this passage to themselves. Such believe indeed

that Jesus Christ is the Chief Corner-Stone, but they quite forget the "Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," which it has pleased Him to lay, and so they do not continue "In the Apostles' Doctrine and Fellowship, and in Breaking of Bread, and in Prayers," but falling away from the true Foundation and Unity of the Church, run imminent risk of losing their hold on the Head Corner-Stone, and do actually lose the Chief Blessings of the "Communion of Saints," and the rich streams of Grace which flow only from Christ to His Church.

Are we then in this Holy Temple? Can we stand the test of the Collect? Are we praying and striving daily, to be more and more joined to our Lord and to His Apostles in Unity of Doctrine and Practice?

For remember, we must not only believe, and

PLAIN CHURCH TEACHING.

~~that~~ to do what we *like*, but we must believe ~~that~~ that Jesus wills us to believe, and seek to do ~~that~~ that He commands us. And these things **He** has not always taught His people directly **from** Himself, but He has made them known **through** His Apostles and Prophets, and so continues to make them known through those who have been appointed according to His Will, to take their places in the Church of God. Are we then listening to the Voice of the Church as unto Christ, are we of the "Apostles' Doctrine and Fellowship?"

But if many break the Union of the Temple of Christ's Body, the Church, by separating from the Doctrine of Christ and His Saints, there is one way in which I am afraid we *most* of us break it, I mean, by our want of Charity for one another. Unless we have this spirit, we are indeed divided from Christ and His

Saints, in the temper of our minds, whatever our Doctrine may be.

Listen to the words of the Epistle, wherein S. Jude salutes the Church, saying, "Mercy unto you, and *peace* and *love* be multiplied." Listen, also, in the Gospel to our Blessed Lord's own words,—“These things I command you, that *ye love one another*.” We may indeed well make the petition of the Collect our own,—“Grant us so to be joined together in *Unity of Spirit* by their doctrine, that we may be made an Holy Temple acceptable unto Thee.” For without Charity, whether in the Church or out of the Church, we are nothing in the sight of God.

Now to-day we celebrate two of the Apostles of Jesus upon whom He built His Church, namely, S. Simon and S. Jude. The Epistle for the day is taken from that of the latter, and

if we study it carefully, we shall see how earnestly he condemns any departure from the true faith, such as was that in his own day, when "certain men crept in unawares, denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." And let us notice how he warns us by the example of the ancient people of God, who, though saved from Egypt, fell away from grace through lack of faith; also, how the angels, "*which kept not their first estate*, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the Judgment of the Great Day;" and how "Sodom and Gomorrah," in like manner, through their sin, brought on themselves "the vengeance of eternal fire;" and all this because they fell away in faith and practice. But, though that of which S. Jude more especially writes is a matter of vital importance touching faith in God and our Lord Jesus Christ, yet is

it a solemn warning for all those who are in any way tempted to mar the Truth of God, and to fall away from Grace given. We have all a "first estate" in the Kingdom of God *to keep*. It is a state of Innocency before God for Christ's Sake, but it is a state of Innocency in Christ's Holy Church, wherein the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost planted us by Baptism. So long as we walk in the Faith of Christ, and do His Will, in fellowship with all His Saints, and in use of the means He has provided, we, by the Grace of God, "*keep* innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right." But if we do not, we fall away from our first estate, and are in the utmost danger, except we be renewed by God unto repentance and an obedient life. Our only true safety is in Faith, Obedience, and Fellowship with the Saints, being members of "the Household of God," and being built upon

the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone, in Whom all the Building fitly framed together groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord."

Very little is known of the ministry and death of S. Simon and S. Jude. But of S. Jude, *Nelson* records, that after ministering in other countries, especially in Judea, he is, by the consent of many writers, said to have travelled into Persia, where he was, for his faithfulness in improving the superstition of that country, cruelly put to death.

It is remarkable that both S. Simon and S. Jude were alike so noted for their earnestness and zeal that the names by which they were called expressed these great gifts. S. Simon is in S. Luke's Gospel called *Simon Zelotes*, or the Zealot, that is, one who is full of zeal; and

S. Jude was also named Thaddeus and Lebbæus, the latter denoting prudence and understanding, but the former, a person zealous in praising God.

What, then, is our special lesson for to-day? First, I think that we must seek union with Christ and with His Saints *in the Church* of God. Secondly, we must strive to keep up that union, and to make it steadfast, by overflowing *Love* towards God and towards men. Thirdly, we must earnestly contend, in all charity, with them who oppose in any way the true Faith of God, which has been “once for all delivered unto the Saints.” And, lastly, we must persevere in this “Unity of the Spirit” even unto the end, ever more and more earnestly desiring that we may know more and more of God’s Will as revealed to His Church: and having come to the knowledge of it, may, with all humbleness

of mind, seek to *do it* to our lives' end. " Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your calling ; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Amen.



All Saints' Day.

(NOVEMBER 1.)



THE WAY OF HOLINESS AND
ITS REWARD.

“Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven.”—*S. Matt.* v. 12.

THE chief lesson of to-day is two-fold, as the Title to our Reading implies, but the Collect is divided into three portions, the first of which forms a link between the teaching of the Festival of SS. Simon and Jude, and that of the Feast which we celebrate to-day.

The connection is this. You will remember

that our special Teaching on SS. Simon and Jude's Day, was on the subject of Unity, or *oneness* amongst Christians, and how in Christ Jesus, the Faithful throughout all ages, are made one.

Now look at the Collect for to-day, and you will see how the same thought again appears. "O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine Elect in *one* Communion and Fellowship, in the Mystical Body of Thy Son Christ our Lord." Next follows the division of our Title, viz., "The Way of Holiness." "Grant us Grace so to follow Thy Blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living." And then the Reward. "That we may come to those Un-speakable Joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee."

Now let us strive to draw out our lesson in accordance with these three thoughts.

First,—The Oneness or Unity of all the Faithful in Christ Jesus the Great Corner-Stone, uniting in Himself the Church of the past, with that of the present, as is also seen in the Mysterious Vision of the Epistle. Second,—The Path of Holiness, which alone can lead to the Promised Recompense, and which is described in the Gospel for the Day, from which our Text is taken : And, Lastly,—The Reward as spoken of alike in Collect, Epistle, and Gospel.

And, First,—The *Unity* of all Believers in Christ Jesus, is most beautifully brought out in the words of the Collect. So close is this Union, so complete this Oneness, that the Elect are said to be *knit* together in one Communion and Fellowship. What more striking figure could have been adopted to show the exceeding closeness of the Bond which unites them! You

will remember the Psalmist uses the same kind of expression, when he prays for God's most Holy Fear. "*O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name.*" And in the Service for the Ordering of Priests, you will find the Church again using the same figure, in one of her hymns in that Service.

"Of strife and of dissention
Dissolve, O Lord, the bands,
And knit the knots of Peace and Love
Throughout all Christian Lands."

There are many thoughts which arise as we meditate on this subject of Unity. We see, as before noticed, how all who are in the Mystical Body of Christ Jesus are one. And how against the very nature of that One Body, must be *all* variance, *all* emulations, all separation whatsoever, all unkindness, all want of love. We see likewise, from the Epistle, as we

have said, how God's people of all ages, are united by Faith which is in Christ Jesus. We see there alike the final acceptance of the Faithful amongst the ancient Israel of God; and also, of the calling in to the Joys of Heaven, of that New and Spiritual Israel, which is gathered from all Lands, into the true Church of Christ. We hear then as it were, their *One* Song, their Glorious Union of Praise. "Salvation to our God, Who sitteth upon the Throne and unto the Lamb." And we easily enter into all this, we very easily indeed lose ourselves in descriptions such as these of the Glories of Heaven, but we must recall ourselves, as the saintly Keble sang,—

"Mount up, for Heaven is won by prayer,
Be sober, for thou art not there."

No verily, but are we in the *Way*? And this brings us to our second point. Are we in

that Path which can alone lead us to Everlasting Glory, even the Way of Holiness in Christ Jesus?

Notice the united testimony of the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, on this point. In the Collect we pray God, to give us the Grace of Holiness, in order that we may come to the Unspeakable Joys of Heaven. In the Epistle we find that the Elect, are only those who are the *Servants* of God, and that it is for their sakes alone, that the pouring forth of God's Anger is delayed. "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, *till we have sealed the Servants of our God* in their foreheads."

And to whom do the words of our text refer, taken out of the Gospel? Even to those, who have so walked in the Purity of Christ, and have so suffered for His Name's Sake, that to them our Lord Himself says,—“Blessed are

ye." "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely* for My Sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven."

But besides this especial application of our text, the Holy Gospel is full of a description of those who are Blessed of God. Blessed now, and who shall be eternally Blessed hereafter.

And who are these ?

The Poor in Spirit,—They that Mourn,—The Meek,—They which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness,—The Merciful,—The Pure in heart,—The Peace-makers.

To these only, are promised, by our Lord Himself :—

The Kingdom of Heaven,—Consolation,—Inheritance,—Satisfaction,—Mercy,—The Vision of God,—The Title of God's Children.

What do we gather, then, from all this? Surely that all virtue and godly living must be our aim, if we would reach the Place prepared for us,—yea, though we have to strive for it even unto the death,—and that we need to be ever living *above* those things which are seen. “For the things which are seen are temporal, but the Things which are not seen are eternal.” “And who is he that will harm you, *if ye be followers of that which is good.*”

And now we come to our last consideration, viz., the reward of those who follow on to the end in the way of holiness. And what is that Reward? Ah! who can tell the full Blessedness of the Redeemed!

The Collect speaks of those “*Unspeakable Joys*” prepared by God Himself for those who unfeignedly love Him. And though, in the Epistle for the Day, some of the Joys of Heaven

are opened out to us, yet we feel as we read, that we do but faintly apprehend the Blessedness described, and do not grasp the true Beatitude of the Saints in Glory. As it is written in those wonderful words which show us how *by nature* we cannot understand the Happiness of Heaven,—“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

It is only as we grow more and more in Grace, and are more and more filled by God's Holy Spirit, that we can enter into the deep things which belong only unto Him, of which S. Paul was able to say, “God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit.”

For to take this in a somewhat different manner; we may *read* indeed of the white robes and the songs of triumph, but *within ourselves* how

Mother, as the Church calls her, "Saint Mary the Virgin," and S. Joseph, Zacharias, S. John Baptist, the Apostles, the great Disciples and Martyrs of Jesus. But, O thank God, we may come much nearer to our own times, to ourselves, than this, for on this day we remember, thank God for, and strive to stir ourselves up to imitate, *All Saints* who have *ever* lived and died, known or unknown. To-day we remember not only *far away* holy persons, so to speak, but our own dear ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus,—our father, it may be, or mother, our wife, our husband, or brother, or sister, or child, who have entered before us into rest. We remember this day, the little ones who fell asleep in the stainless robes of their Baptismal Innocence,—“just born, baptized, and gone.” We remember the poor of Jesus, well-nigh unknown by all but Him, who in the midst



of poverty, by patience and stedfast trust, showed themselves to be of His faithful servants, and have been thus numbered with the Saints. And we remember, too, the lonely sufferers, who on sick beds, forsaken by all but Him, had Jesus only to smooth their dying pillow. And we commemorate the over-worked, the afflicted, the captives, the exiles, the ship-wrecked, who have died in the Lord. We remember, too, all those who, having forsaken home and friends to follow Christ and to preach in far off lands, have laid down their lives for Him, far away from all they held most dear in this world. All the faithful servants of God, high and low, rich and poor, young and old, we remember this day, where-soever and whensoever they may have lived and died faithfully and holily.

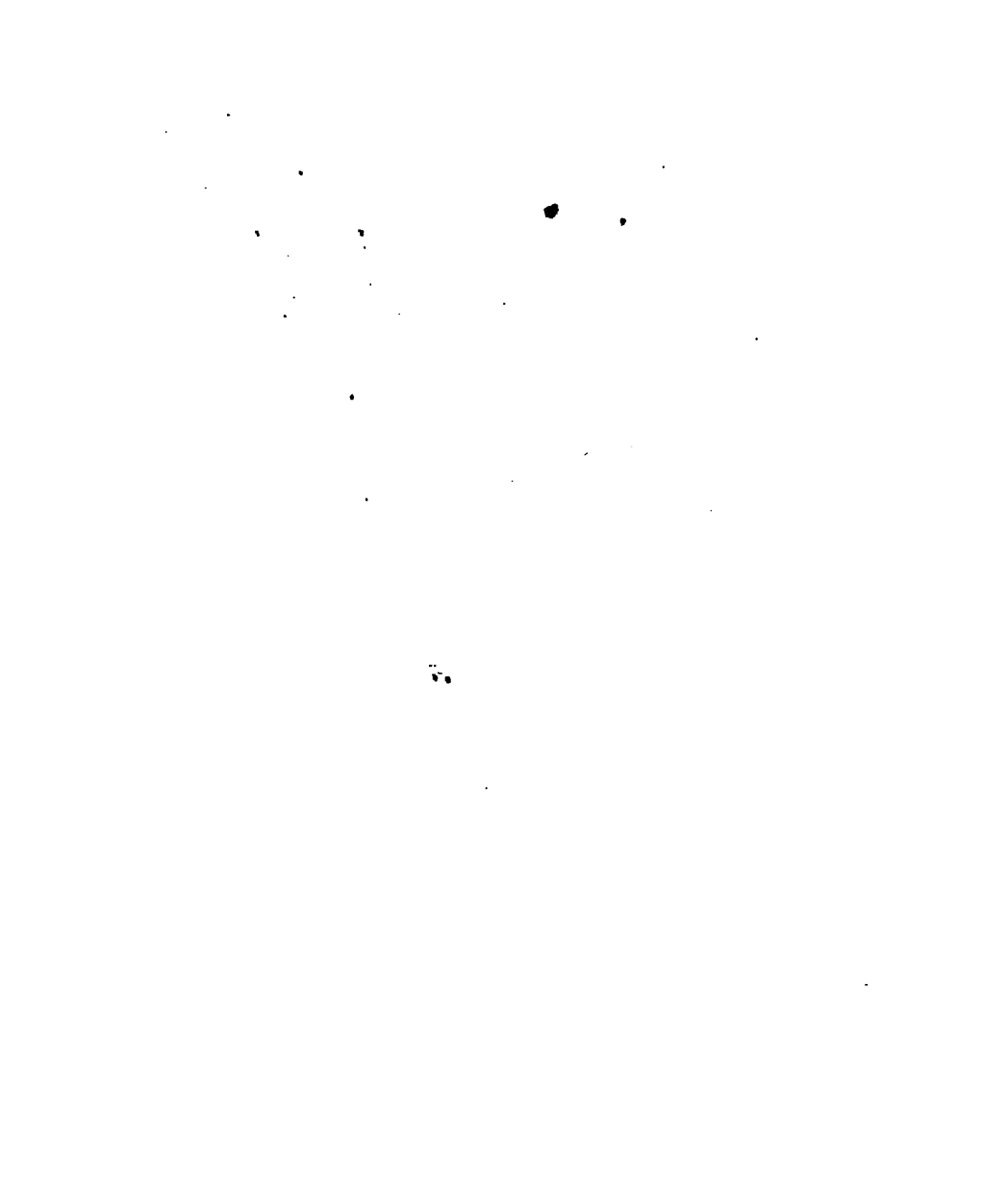
“When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of

heaven to *all* believers." "After this, I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb." Wherefore, be ye not slothful, "but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the Promises." "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven."













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